# Contents

Abbreviations..............................................................................................................................................ii

1. Introduction.............................................................................................................................................1
   1.1. Aims and methods.............................................................................................................................1
   1.2. Theoretical background.....................................................................................................................4
      1.2.1. Four key concepts......................................................................................................................5
      1.2.2. Ludwig Wittgenstein ...................................................................................................................8
      1.2.3. Norman Holland ...................................................................................................................... 12
      1.2.4. Stanley Fish ............................................................................................................................ 22
      1.2.5. David Bleich ............................................................................................................................ 29
      1.2.6. Wolfgang Iser.......................................................................................................................... 41
      1.2.7. Theoretical conclusions .......................................................................................................... 46
   1.3. The study........................................................................................................................................ 50
   1.4. Method of analysis, definitions and the problem of similarity versus uniqueness ......................... 55

2. Results and discussion ...................................................................................................................... 62
   2.1. Common interpretations................................................................................................................. 63
      2.1.1. Common interpretations, the text and references to it............................................................ 77
   2.2. Agreement and variety on the level of questions and texts ........................................................... 86
   2.3. Opposing opinions.......................................................................................................................... 96
   2.4. Individual elements in the answers .............................................................................................. 106
      2.4.1. Exceptional interpretations ................................................................................................... 106
      2.4.2. Influence of the readers' own experiences and personal concerns ..................................... 113
   2.5. Influence of gender and education............................................................................................... 125
   2.6. Summary of the empirical results................................................................................................. 128

3. Possible criticism .............................................................................................................................. 130

4. Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 135

Appendix A. Instructions for the survey ............................................................................................. 140

Appendix B. Questionnaire A............................................................................................................... 142

Appendix C. Questionnaire B............................................................................................................... 148

Appendix D. Questionnaire C............................................................................................................... 152

Appendix E. Questionnaire D ............................................................................................................... 155

Appendix F. Various interpretations.................................................................................................... 158

Appendix G. Answers to question 5 in section B of questionnaire D .................................................... 162

Works cited ............................................................................................................................................ 163
Abbreviations

**Text labels**
Text A, WàM "The Witch à la Mode" by D. H. Lawrence
Text B, RiH "Rain in the Heart" by Peter Taylor
Text C "The Hitchhiking Game" by Milan Kundera

**Abbreviations used in participant labels**
F female participant
M male participant
Li student of literature
La student of some language
O student of something other than literature or language

**Abbreviations of sources**
COD *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*

*David Bleich*
GI "Gender Interests in Reading and Language"
IR "Intersubjective Reading"
SC *Subjective Criticism*
TML "The Materiality of Language"

*Stanley Fish*
DVP "Demonstration vs. Persuasion"
WCA "With the Compliments of the Author: Reflections on Austin and Derrida"
HRP "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One"
IV "Interpreting the *Variorum*"
Text *Is There a Text in This Class*
TNC "Truth but No Consequences"
Wiser "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser"
WMIA "What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?"
YOM "Yet Once More"

*Norman Holland*
5RR *5 Readers Reading*
CI *The Critical I*
NP "The New Paradigm: Subjective or Transactive"
WT "Where is a Text: A Neurological View"

*Wolfgang Iser*
AR *The Act of Reading*
Indeterminacy "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction"
TLW "Talk Like Whales: A Reply to Stanley Fish"

*Ludwig Wittgenstein*
BB *The Blue and Brown Books*
PG *Philosophical Grammar*
Pl *Philosophical Investigations*
Commentaries on Ludwig Wittgenstein

AC I  Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. An analytical commentary on the Philosophical Investigations 1 by Baker and Hacker

AC III  Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind. An analytical commentary on the Philosophical Investigations 3 by Hacker

1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and methods

The conviction that readers form very different interpretations of the same work has prevailed in the literary community for a long time. The first researcher to demonstrate the matter with empirical data was I. A. Richards in *Practical Criticism* published in 1929. His collection of a hundred poetry analyses written by Cambridge students and graduates included such an "astonishing variety of human responses" that Richards found even the systematic organisation of them "irksome" (12). In 1975, more evidence of the idiosyncrasy of responses was put forth by Norman Holland. In *5 Readers Reading* Holland presented the free associations of five readers to Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and concluded that the many differences in the interpretations reflected each reader’s characteristic patterns of defence and fantasy (283-286). A few years later David Bleich argued in *Subjective Criticism* that all knowledge has a subjective motivation and suggested that the unique responses of individual students spring from disharmonious feelings related to the reading experience (65, 83-84).

Yet, when one reads interpretations of works in literary journals or criticisms, it seems the authors of such articles generally assume that other people can agree with their understanding of the work. When we communicate with other people, we expect them to understand what we mean and are surprised, irritated or concerned if we discover they have misunderstood. It seems curious that although we expect people to understand verbal expressions in approximately the same way in other uses of language, many people seem convinced that when these expressions appear in a work of fiction, people will understand them differently.

In this thesis I would like to take a closer look at the assumptions and analyses of Norman Holland and David Bleich, as well as Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser. In addition to discussing their work from a theoretical point of view, I will also present
my results from analysing the responses of twenty-seven readers to three short stories, and examine how these theories might explain the results.

My first thesis is that many of the assumptions related to language in the theories of Holland, Bleich, Fish and Iser are rather problematic. I suggest that Ludwig Wittgenstein's view of language as a rule-governed activity, which is based on habit, training and an understanding of human beings, offers a better foundation for understanding literature as a form of language use. My second thesis is that contrary to the conclusions of, for example, Richards and Holland, readers seem to form a similar understanding of many aspects of a text. The answers contain also unique elements, such as individual observations and explanations, but the majority of these unique elements seem to support the common conclusions and therefore it seems likely that many other readers would agree with them. Clearly deviant views are rare.

A similar finding has already been presented by Martindale and Dailey in "I. A. Richards revisited: Do readers agree in their interpretations of literature?" They asked 32 psychology students to read the poems Richards used, and after three minutes of reading, rate 40 aspects of the poems on a 7-point rating scale. The results showed a high degree of agreement for 36 of the 40 aspects (304-305). In their second experiment, eleven psychology students were asked to read three of the poems in Richards' selection and write a short essay on each poem. The essays were analysed with a computer program that summed up the evaluation, activity and potency values of the words the respondents used and calculated the average ratings for each essay. The researchers also read through the essays and concluded from both analyses that "most people extract a similar meaning or gist from a poem" (307).

I hope to supplement the results of Martindale and Dailey with an examination of the assumptions of four prominent reader-response theories. My study supplements theirs also by providing responses to a different text type: prose rather than poetry. Since the readers were allowed to use as much time as they liked and could comment on different aspects of the texts freely, I believe this study can avoid some problems related to Martindale and Dailey's setup and also provide grounds for
examining how different factors, such as associations to personal life or beliefs, influence interpretation.

When I repeated Martindale and Dailey's first experiment on myself, I ran into two problems. First, I felt three minutes were barely enough to determine the gist of a poem, let alone to assess the composition. Second, when rating the poems for aspects such as "static", "tense", or "strong", I discovered I did not have ready criteria for assessing poems through these terms, and consequently no opinion. To form an opinion, I should have first defined the criteria by analysing and comparing various poems, and then made a close analysis of each poem in the experiment, but the timeframe did not permit this. As a result, I used the middle of the scale most frequently and completed the rating in time only for seven of the thirteen poems. Some of these problems could be due to weaknesses in my language skills. However, since Richards found that his native speakers had difficulty understanding the poems (Richards 13) and one of Martindale and Dailey's students reported such difficulties in the second experiment (313), it seems possible their subjects suffered from similar problems as I did. I think this casts some doubt on whether the agreement in the ratings is actually due to similarity in opinions. It may instead reflect similar solutions to difficulties in making sense of the poems and in rating aspects one does not have a clear opinion of.

The advantage of freely worded responses is that difficulties in understanding can be revealed. Freely worded responses also offer an opportunity to examine how various other factors may influence interpretation. For example, does agreement vary between different types of questions or texts? Does a reader have a particular style of answering questions, which might spring from the special needs of a reader's identity, as Holland suggests? Does a reader have a tendency to use the same explanation in different contexts or pay attention to certain types of details, which might be due to personal concerns, as Bleich suggests? Are associations to personal life common and how do they affect interpretation? What sort of textual details or beliefs is a particular interpretation based on? These are some of the questions I have asked while analysing the answers.
The structure of this thesis is as follows. I first discuss the theories of Holland, Bleich, Fish and Iser, as well as Wittgenstein's views on language use. I then introduce the setup, method of analysis and definitions for some key terms in my empirical study. These are then followed by the results from the empirical study and an examination of how each finding could be explained by the different theoretical frameworks. Finally, I consider possible criticisms against this study and present the conclusions with some suggestions for future research.

1.2. Theoretical background

I chose to examine the theories of Norman Holland, David Bleich, Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser because they represent four different and influential approaches to explaining reader response. These theories offer an interesting starting point also because each one of them tries to tackle the most fundamental questions related to the comprehension of literature. As Holland points out, most of the recent empirical reader-response research tries to answer very specific questions ("Reader-response criticism" 1205) rather than form a comprehensive theory of literary response, and therefore I will not review this literature in this thesis. Holland, Bleich, Fish and Iser form an interesting group also because they have both criticised and, in some cases, influenced each other's work.

I will concentrate on their writings from the 1970's because it seems that at this time they formulated the theses that have inspired their work up to the current moment. For example, in "Do I Write for an Audience" Iser repeats the claims of his reception theory and suggests that the literary anthropology he has later concentrated on is "a direct offshoot of reception theory" (313). In TML, Bleich restates his assumption that each person speaks a different version of a language and that language pedagogy should explore these differences (137). This was his starting point also in SC. Fish seems to have held onto his constructive argument at least up to 1995 when "Yet Once More" was published, and though Holland has later been inspired by cognitive psychology (CI)
and neuropsychology (WT), he seems to use these new frameworks to persuade people that interpretation is inherently constructive and depends on idiosyncratic processes, whether these are conceived as psychological strategies of defence and fantasy creation (5RR), processes of hypothesis formation governed by the identity (CI) or neurological processes (WT).

One of the most interesting aspects of these theories is their assumptions related to the nature of language and the mechanisms that make communication possible. Because all of these theories contain assumptions analysed by Wittgenstein, I will also present some of the most basic insights in Wittgenstein's later thinking. However, before introducing each of these theories, I would like to examine four concepts that seem to be particularly important in this discussion. These are interpretation, formal feature, objectivity and idiosyncrasy.

1.2.1. Four key concepts

When we read texts, it seems we form an understanding of the following things: the immediate purpose an expression has in a given context, the character's motives for behaving in the described way or the causes of a described situation, and the author's motives to present a character or a situation in a particular way. Typically our views of these matters are intertwined. We do not necessarily have to consider the author's motives, but it seems that particularly in ambiguous situations, we will try to determine the plausibility of different options by examining what motives the author could have had. Often we also evaluate the language of the text, its composition, the characters and the author. Usually, people present only their final conclusions, but it seems interpretation is essentially a matter of forming an understanding of different possibilities, and choosing among them.

Since interpretation seems to be a matter of choosing among different possibilities, Holland, Bleich, Iser and Fish emphasise that it is a construction made by the reader. All of them also suggest that because interpretation is constructive, the
distinction between subjective and objective is either misleading, loses its force or is erased. Iser suggests that when the readers form images of the text, the subject-object distinction disappears and they see themselves guided from without (AR 140). Holland argues in his early work that perception involves a subjective and objective component because people use "external knowledge" to recreate their personal identity (NP 342-345). In his later work, he argues that as readings are the product of unique brain processes, readers cannot say anything about books as objects of an outer reality (WT 30). Similarly, Bleich suggests that readers can only know their own symbolisations of objects, and urges us not to confuse these with the real object, which presumably we cannot know (SC 98). Fish argues that readings cannot be objective because they are always tied to a particular point of view, but they are not subjective either because all available points of view are social (HRP 335). As a result, the distinction between subjective and objective is blurred (ibid. 336). Hence the term "objective" has a central role in all of these theories, but it also seems to have a somewhat different meaning to each one.

In Fish's thinking "objective" seems to refer to some absolutely neutral point of view outside particular social frameworks. In NP, Holland suggests he is following the definition from his American Heritage Dictionary according to which "objective" means "[o]f or having to do with a material object as distinguished from a mental concept, idea, or belief" (342). In WT, it seems Holland wants to make a distinction between real objects and mental objects, and suggest that we can only know the latter. This seems to be the gist of Bleich's argument also. On the other hand, Iser seems to be arguing that because the image building erases the "subject-object division essential for all perception", the moment we stop reading and building images, we "find ourselves detached from our world, to which we are inextricably tied, and able to perceive it as an object" (AR 140). Apparently the ability to perceive the world as an object then gives us a better understanding of it (ibid.). Hence, Fish, Bleich and Holland seem to argue that our knowledge is always limited to our own point of view, and Iser seems to believe that
literature is one means of freeing us from this point of view in order to gain new knowledge.

But even though Fish, Bleich and Holland suggest that the term "objective" should be abandoned from a discussion of literary response, the similarity in the readers' responses suggests that at least in some sense the texts are objective entities. We cannot perhaps escape social points of view as Fish points out, but if language use is a social activity, is not the only relevant objectivity one that can be established from these social viewpoints? Moreover, even if the processes used in constructing a text or a perception are idiosyncratic, we may well agree on the outcome, for our understanding of our perceptions also depends on social definitions and criteria. It is possible that each person constructs the green colour differently in his or her mind, but people's judgement of whether something is green will depend on the public criteria of using the word "green" correctly.

The term *formal feature* has a central role in Fish's argumentation, therefore it is important to clarify what is meant with it. He first defines formal features as the points at which he would declare readers to have produced an interpretive act (IV 163). A few pages later he gives a more conventional content to "formal feature" by citing line endings and alliteration as examples of formal units that are brought to existence by interpretive acts (IV 166). Because it seems the points at which a reader has performed an interpretive act can only be identified by referring to words, the term "formal feature" seems to mainly refer to words and the properties of arrangements of words.

Finally, the term *idiosyncratic* is often used in this discussion. Bleich argues that people have idiosyncratic language systems and Holland suggests that perception relies on idiosyncratic processes. It seems they are using this term to emphasise the idea that the process or language is *not shared*, but is peculiar to the person and could be eccentric as well. Let us then examine the insights Wittgenstein's later philosophy can offer to understanding linguistic communication.
1.2.2. Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein's aim in the *Philosophical Investigations* was to challenge a number of assumptions that had influenced the discussion about the nature of language for hundreds of years. This set of assumptions is often referred to as the *Augustinian picture of language*, because it seems to have its roots in Augustine's description of how he learnt language.

When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shewn [sic] by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires. (Augustine, *Confessiones* I. 8. as translated in *PI* p. 2.)

The assumptions that flowed from this description were the following. All meaningful words are names of objects; the meaning of a word is the object it stands for (*AC I* 36). The meaning does not depend on the context of use because the word always stands for the same object (*AC I* 37). Sentences consist of combinations of names (*AC I* 41). Ostensive definitions provide a way of correlating words with objects, thus ostensive definitions are the fundamental form of explaining the meaning of a word (*AC I* 36). An unambiguous ostensive definition defines the meaning of a word completely (*AC I* 37). Once we know what the word stands for, we will also know the rules for using the word (*AC I* 37). Because the rules of word usage flow from the nature of the object correlated with the word, the structure of language reveals also the structure of the world (*AC I* 38).

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1 The German original of *PI* quotes the Latin version of *Confessiones* as well as offers a German translation. Most likely, the English version quoted here is a translation of the German in *PI* because no source is given for it and it differs from some other English translations of the *Confessions*. 
Understanding a word is a mental act of associating a word with the object it stands for (AC I 38). Knowing the object that the word stands for must give a full understanding of the word (AC I 39). To mean something with a word is to intend that it should stand for a particular object, thus meaning something is like pointing mentally to the intended object (AC I 39). Understanding a sentence consists in correlating its words with the objects they stand for and apprehending its logical form; as a result one associates the sentence with a possible state of affairs (AC I 44). Meaning and understanding are separate from the physical activity of speaking or writing; they are mental activities that give life to linguistic signs, which by themselves appear dead and arbitrary (AC I 39).

Wittgenstein begins his challenge to the Augustinian picture by pointing out that all words cannot sensibly be considered names (PI §27, 13). For example, it is difficult to see what object the expressions "nothing", "Ouch!" or "this" would stand for. Moreover, the "object" a word can be correlated with is not its meaning but the bearer of the name. For example, "when Mr. N. N. dies one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies" (§40, 20). Therefore he suggests a better definition: "For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (§43, 20, emphasis original).

It is crucial to understand that words have many different uses which contribute to their meaning (§10-11, 6; §23, 11). In some cases, such as with the word "bank", the meanings are independent. In other cases, such as with the word "game", we can find a complex network of similarities between the activities that are called a game, but there need not be any one aspect that is common to all games. Concepts of the latter type can be called "family resemblance" concepts (§66-67, 31-32).

Language use is always part of some human activity and "form of life" (§23, 11), and one cannot understand language without understanding the form of life to which it is related. A precondition for the use of signs in communication is a certain degree of regularity in human activity and judgments (§198, 80; §242, 88). This regularity is also
enhanced by training people to react to signs in a particular way: to obey rules (§198-199, 80-81). When examining language, it can be useful to notice a parallel between language and another rule-governed activity, that of playing games. We can examine particular uses of language together with the actions—the form of life—in which they are embedded as language-games (§7, 5; §23, 11).

Naming through ostensive definition is one such language-game (§27, 13). An ostensive definition, together with the object it may use as a sample, is a rule that provides a standard of correctness for applying the word (BB 12, AC I 178, 188). But, an ostensive definition is informative only if the place for it is already prepared, if one knows the rules for using this type of word (§30-31, 14-5). For example, the ostensive definition "this is red" is helpful only if I already know how colour words are used. Thus an ostensive definition does not define the use and meaning of a word completely or forge a link between language and reality as the Augustinian picture of language supposes, but is one rule among others.

There are two common protests to the idea that language use is a rule-governed activity. First, it is suggested that any action can be made to accord with a rule, and second, that we do not necessarily have a rule for every conceivable situation. Wittgenstein answers the first challenge by pointing out that in order to interpret every action as being in accord with a rule, one has to change the interpretation of the rule constantly (§201, 81). Yet, interpretations hang in the air just like the thing they interpret (§198, 80). The connection between a rule and an action is established by training, not through interpretation (ibid.). Second, he suggests that rules do not need to regulate all possible aspects of word usage (§68, 33), nor does a word need to have a fixed meaning to be useful (§79, 37). He reminds us that "If I tell someone 'Stand roughly there'—may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too?" (§88, 41). If a misunderstanding seems likely, one can give a further explanation. But, each explanation can only clear a particular misunderstanding, not every possible one (§87, 41). Moreover, rules do not compel anyone to do anything, rather, "one makes oneself do what the rule requires" (Language 259).
It is also misconceived to think that understanding consists in forming an image of the object or state of affairs denoted by an expression. For example, we may assume that upon hearing the order "bring me a green cube" we first form a mental image of a green cube and then compare this image with the objects available. But, if the order would be "imagine a green cube", we would generally not suppose that in order to fulfil the order one has to conjure up an image of a green cube to serve as a model for the cube to be imagined (BB 3). Besides, how can we know that the image we form when hearing a word or a sentence is a depiction of it (PI §239, 88)? An image that serves as a sample could be replaced by a physical sample (BB 3), in either case the sample is helpful only if we know what it is a sample of and how it is to be used (PI §239, 88). This knowledge is provided by the rules of language (PI §381, 88). A mental image or a drawing can be an illustration of what we have understood, but "it is no more essential to the understanding of a proposition that one should imagine anything in connexion [sic] with it, than that one should make a sketch from it" (PI §396, 120). The criteria for mental images and understanding are completely different. The criteria for my mental images is my sincere statement, but my assertion that I understand can be undermined by my subsequent performance which reveals a misunderstanding (AC I 607). Instead of being a mental activity of image building, understanding is akin to an ability. Our understanding of a word is manifested in our ability to use it correctly (AC I 610).

Sometimes it is suggested that understanding is an experience, a state or a process. The problem with the idea that understanding is an experience is that understanding may be accompanied by many different kinds of experiences. Moreover, one can feel that one understands though one is mistaken (§151-152, 59-60). The problem with the idea that understanding is a process or state is that both of these have duration, but one cannot generally answer the question "When did you stop understanding that word?" (PI p. 59, AC I 608-10). Most importantly, we do not determine whether someone has understood a given expression by determining what experiences or processes are going on in his or her mind or what state of mind the person is in.
We decide whether a person has understood by the way he or she paraphrases the expression or answers questions related to it (ibid.).

Wittgenstein also challenges the view that the signs by themselves are dead and gain meaning only through a mental act. "We regard understanding as the essential thing, and signs as something inessential.—But in that case, why have the signs at all?" (PG 39). Indeed. If the signs were not connected with our understanding, we might as well do without them. But words are not just inessential accompaniments of communicative acts. The way words are understood is related to the rules that regulate their usage. If the rules change, our understanding of the word changes also (Kenny 152).

Thus in Wittgenstein's view, language use is an activity governed by rules and based on a certain regularity in human behaviour. Understanding language cannot be separated from understanding the human activity it is a part of. Understanding is manifested in the correct use of a word; mental states, processes, images or experiences that may or may not accompany the use of words are inessential for determining how a person understands an expression. The most important rules of language are the common practises of using words, and our understanding of words is connected with these practises. The rules of language are learnt through training. Ostensive definitions are often used in training, and they should be conceived as rules that provide a standard of correctness for using the word. However, as words have many different uses, the same utterance can often be understood in different ways. The rules of language do not define all aspects of language use, and it is also possible to deliberately go against a rule. With these insights in mind, let us turn to the theories of Holland, Fish, Bleich and Iser.

1.2.3. Norman Holland

The question Norman Holland seeks to answer is: why do people interpret the same text differently (5RR ix). His starting point is that Freud's theory of psychoanalysis provides a good basis for understanding responses to literature (8). His second assumption is that
despite differences in behaviour, every individual has a unique unchanging core that guides all his dealings with the world (53). This core consists of strategies with which the individual tries to gain maximum pleasure and ward off anxiety caused by conflicts between desires and the demands of reality (55). These strategies remain the same throughout life, and Holland suggests that the constancy arising from them could be called the "identity theme", to use Heinz Lichtenstein's term (56).

Holland has also adopted the psychoanalytical tenet that the wordings of free associations uncover the dynamics of the ego producing them (45). Therefore, he chose to investigate literary response by conducting informal interviews with students in order to elicit their free associations to several short stories. He then analysed the responses to determine how each student's ego functions (44, 52). The students also took three personality tests: the Rorschach, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), and COPE. For one group of readers Holland tried to predict the results of the personality tests from the readers' responses to the stories and for another group he tried to predict the responses from the results of the personality tests, but both sets of predictions turned out to be too imprecise (52). Holland decided to take the interviews as his primary data and use the personality tests only as a supplement, which was overruled in the few cases where the two sets of data conflicted (52).

In his analysis, Holland first tried to determine a student's identity theme by looking at general traits in the reader's responses to the personality test and all the short stories (64). He then set out to determine how the identity theme was reflected in the reader's response to one story (65). He concluded that reading is governed by four principles: 1) "style seeks itself", 2) "defenses must be matched", 3) "fantasy projects fantasies", and 4) "character transforms characteristically" (113-122). The first principle is that a reader responds positively to a work or a part of it only when it fulfils his or her hopes towards the work (114). The second principle is that a reader must find in the work something that corresponds to his or her way of defending against anxiety (115). Holland also assumes that the reader will "tone, split, or shape the literary work considerably to make it fit" his or her defences (285). The third principle states that from the material that
has matched his or her defences the reader will create his or her typical wish-fulfilling fantasy (117, 121). Finally, the reader will transform the fantasy into "an intellectual content" such as a "literary point or theme" (121-2).

Holland's view of texts is summed on page 12 of 5RR. On the one hand, he suggests that texts are just dead signs "specks of carbon", which each reader moulds to fit the dictates of his or her unique defences and fantasies. On the other hand, he suggests that texts represent something shared. He thinks the reader must be "responding to something", and this something is characterised as "a matrix of psychological possibilities" (12), "a sharable promptuary" (287) and "the sameness in the resources" (247).

Thus in Holland's framework, the differences in the responses to this study would be explained by the differences in the readers' characteristic strategies for avoiding anxiety and seeking pleasure. The similarity would be due to the "the sameness in the resources used to create the experience" (247).

There seem to be three aspects of Holland's early work that could be challenged. First, as David Bleich points out, it is questionable whether Holland's method allows discovering a reader's identity theme (SC 117-119). Second, Holland pays very little attention to the similarities in the answers. Third, although Holland assumes that words-on-the-page form a "sharable promptuary" (287), his theory does not explain where this shared basis would come from. I will examine each suggestion in more detail.

The first problem in Holland's work is that he has not determined the identity themes of his subjects independently of their responses in a context that would allow a true understanding of the underlying principles in someone's behaviour. As David Bleich points out, the identity theme in Lichtenstein's sense is developed in a long therapeutic relationship from extensive knowledge of a person's life history (SC 117). Since the aim of therapy is to enhance a person's self-understanding, it is essential that the person participates in formulating the identity theme and accepts the formulation (SC 117). This is analogous to Freud's approach where years of free association in all aspects of a person's life are used to help the person discover for himself the origin of his symptoms
in his life history (e.g. Freud 79, 227-229). It seems plausible that in a long therapeutic relationship the patient and analyst can together discover the person's characteristic strategies of dealing with the world, if indeed people do always use the same strategies. However, as Bleich suggests, it seems implausible that one can determine someone's characteristic defences and fantasies in a short, formal relationship with minimal knowledge of the person's life history and without his or her insights concerning his or her motivations (SC 117-119).

As Bleich also points out, it is unclear how Holland has determined what in a response represents defence and what fantasy, since the same aspect of a response can be seen as either (SC 119). It seems one can only distinguish between them if one knows from some other context what is characteristic for a person. The personality tests could not provide an independent reference point since Holland decided to use the responses as his primary data on personality and overrule the personality tests when they conflicted with the responses (5RR 52). Thus, the short cut Holland has used in determining the students' identity themes diminishes the persuasiveness of his results.

The second question Holland's work raises is: what weight should we give to the unique aspects of responses? It seems that if one concentrates on what makes the responses unique, they are bound to appear idiosyncratic and hence the result of personal strategies. If, however, one concentrates on the gist of uniquely worded responses, one may discover many similarities, which may give a rather different perspective to the nature of literary interpretation. Holland's own analysis provides a good example of this. In chapter one he presents his readers' views of the "tableau" in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily". His aim is to show how differently each reader saw the tableau, and certainly there are differences (see 5RR 4). Yet, the answers also have similarities which Holland does not touch upon. It seems all the readers, as well as Holland himself, took the tableau as an indication of what the relationship between the father and daughter was like. The father was seen as a dominating figure who keeps possible suitors away from Emily. The horsewhip was mentioned by all readers and mostly associated with sadism or control. Here are some examples.
The father was very domineering. One of the most striking [sic] images in the book is that of the townsfolk looking through the door as her father stands there with a horsewhip in his hands, feet spread apart and between or through him you see a picture of Emily standing in the background, and that pretty much sums up exactly the kind of relationship they had.

(Sam 1, sic original)

'Horsewhip' there—rings—'spraddled silhouette.' That seems right to me. That summarizes the relationship, I think. [...] A horsewhip suggesting all sorts of nasty, sexual, sadistic overtones [...] Do they mean the horsewhip rather than his own stern demeanor? (Saul 2)

[H]e's defending Southern womanhood, perhaps, and defending it in that sort of mindless way that says, 'Well now, we've got to defend it.' [...] You could, I suppose, as an alternative interpretation say that [...] there's overtones that Daddy is sadistic enough—horsewhips being pretty sadistic things to carry around when you're greeting people [...] but I don't think they're much more than overtones. (Shep 2-3)

[T]he aristocrat of the Southern town, whose father is the original superego with a horsewhip, beating off suitors. (Sebastian 3)

They said they always had this picture of him standing, you know, sitting in the door with a whip in his hand. [...] I guess she's supposed to be standing up behind her father, who would probably be looking very cross, say, if someone had come to call on her. (Sandra 3, emphasis original)

He dominates Emily, driving her suitors away with his horsewhip [...] (Holland, 27)

Perhaps Holland considered these similarities trivial. But I find it very interesting that each reader paid attention to a small detail like the horsewhip, and associated a sense of control with the tableau. It seems that although the readers had different associations related to the words, their basic understanding of the passage was very similar.

How then, could we explain the readers' attention to the horsewhip with Holland's theory? We might ask why all the readers should have managed to match this word with their defences, and after projecting their unique fantasies on it, assign similar intellectual contents to it? Holland would probably point to the concept of shared resources and to his assumption that the composition of the text constrains the readers' recreation of it (247, 219). But here we run into the third problem in his theory. If readers are supposed to mould the resources of the text "considerably" before allowing them to enter their mental processes, let only parts of the resources in, and process them in a unique way (285), it seems very difficult to explain how a shared basis of language is established and how language constrains interpretation. If we assume that words are just
dead "specks of carbon" (12), the meaning of which depends on the reader's psychology, then language does not have a shared basis. The shared basis can only come about if people tend to react to symbols in the same way. Wittgenstein offers one way to explain this tendency; he suggests that it comes from habit, training, shared rules and a common understanding of human beings.

In Wittgenstein's framework we might explain the readers' attention to the whip and the meanings they attach to it with the following factors. Our linguistic training tells us that the word "horsewhip" stands for a device that is used to control horses by inflicting pain on them if they behave in an undesired way. Our knowledge of human beings tells us that people can use these devices also to inflict pain on other people, as a form of control or as a source of sadistic pleasure, for example. The whip thus carries with it connotations of threat and control. Our understanding of human behaviour also tells us, as Shep points out, that it is uncustomary to answer the door with a whip in one's hand. I would argue that the main reason why the readers have paid attention to this word is that it is surprising in the given context. One wonders why he should stand in the doorway with a whip in his hand. One option is that the whip is meant to signal threat to unwanted visitors, and by controlling entry to the house, the father dominates Emily's life. This conclusion seems to also fit the impression of Emily given by the other events of the story.

Wittgenstein's insights do not, however, help us to understand why Sebastian seems comfortable with the idea that the whip is used to beat off suitors, while Saul and Shep seem to shrink away from the realisation that the whip carries sadistic connotations with it. Here it seems psychological factors are involved. But it should be noted that in this case the different emotional responses seem to spring from understanding the words in the same way. Thus we should make a distinction between a reader's understanding of the words and his or her emotional response to them.

2 Saul blurs the image into questions, and Shep emphasises that the sadism is only an "overtone".
It seems Holland came to realise that similarities in responses deserve more attention than he had given to them in 5RR because in *The Critical I* he devotes more time to explaining the similarity in responses. Identity is still in the heart of his thinking but instead of being a unique core of strategies used to gain pleasure and defend against anxiety, it is defined more loosely as "a construct, a way to represent the continuities we see in someone" (CI 27). Most importantly, identity governs a person's cognitive processes. In Holland's later work, reading is a process where different feedback loops form hypotheses about what words could mean and propose these to the identity (28). If a hypothesis satisfies the demands of the identity, it is accepted, if it threatens to give painful feelings, the person will defend against it (ibid.).

In this new model inspired by cognitive psychology Holland suggests that physical perception is a "lower" feedback loop that is controlled by a "higher" mental feedback loop. The lower loop feeds a stimulus into the higher loop which forms a hypothetical interpretation of the stimulus. The lower loop then gives feedback on the proposed hypothesis and so on until an interpretation that satisfies the person's identity and the stimulus has been found (32-33). For example, the lower feedback loop can suggest that there is a white object hovering in the sky. The higher feedback loop starts to propose hypotheses, such as: "Is it a bird?", "Is it a piece of paper?" and test them against the feedback from the lower loop until the feedback loops have found a hypothesis that fits the stimulus and does not present a threat to the identity.

Though some of the hypotheses are physiological, a great deal of them are learnt and internalized from culture (33). There are two kinds of cultural codes. Some codes cannot be interpreted otherwise by the members of a culture; a good example is the American flag for Americans (34). These kinds of codes are called *codes*, and they will also limit interpretation (38-9). Others, such as words, can be interpreted in different ways depending on the interpretive community we belong to (35-6). Such codes are called *canons* (38). For example, Holland suggests that in the sentence "This house is red, also this color" it is unclear whether "this" refers to another colour on the house or another sample of red (36). The code is ambiguous but "the rule we apply [for
determining the meaning of a word] is shared by all normal members of a certain culture, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to vary it, although we might very well differ about how to apply the rule" (36). Words do not simply mean something, but we "make them mean by bringing to bear some set of tests" (37). Presumably because these tests are different, the word "whip" may make a chef think about a whisk, while a Member of Parliament perhaps thinks of a party leader (37). From this Holland concludes that "we differ about the meanings of words, and it is normal to do so" (37). In addition to the meaning of words, we can also internalise values and concerns from our culture (38). Identity satisfies itself by acting on cultural codes and values (39). Therefore even "identical opinions (canons) can reflect—must reflect—different identities" (39, emphasis original).

Thus in this later version the basic idea of identity that governs response and moulds the world according to its needs is retained but the identity is now more restricted by learnt cultural codes and Holland has examined the nature of these codes more closely. Words in themselves do not mean but people bring them to mean through mental processes of hypothesis formation, which are governed by the identity. The rules for determining the meaning of a word are shared and rigid but their application varies. Words mean different things to different people. The role of mental processes in understanding is accentuated also in Holland's most recent article "Where is a Text", where he argues for the constructive nature of perception from a neurological point of view. His main argument is that the objects we interpret as well as our interpretations are the product of "quite precise and quite idiosyncratic brain processes", and therefore readers cannot say anything about texts as objects of an outer reality (30).

3 The similarity between Holland's earlier and later view shows clearly in these two summaries from 5 Readers Reading and The Critical I.

"The difference comes from the differences in character. The sameness comes from the sameness in the resources used to create the experience." (SRR 247-8)

"We can account for the uniqueness as individual identity. We can account for the sameness by the sameness of the hypotheses [the subjects] brought to the movie." (CI 28)
Again some of Holland's conclusions can be questioned. First, I would like to examine more closely the argument that words mean different things to different people and that the rules of language are rigid but their application varies. I think we can also ask that if a conventional interpretation can reflect various identities, is it sensible to try to explain it with the identity rather than the convention? Finally, we should examine what consequences the idea that the mind participates in perception has for understanding reader-response. As the constructive nature of perception and interpretation is also Fish's main argument, I will examine this last point in conjunction with Fish's views and concentrate here on the first three points.

Holland suggests that a chef may connect the word "whip" with a whisk while an MP may think about a party leader. From this he concludes that words have a different meaning for different people. The problem with this reasoning is that it ignores the fact that a word usually has many different uses, as Wittgenstein points out. The fact that two people may think of two different uses when hearing a word out of context does not warrant the conclusion that the word has a different meaning for each one. This conclusion is justified only if it turns out that each individual knows only one use of the word and this use differs from that known to the others. For example, we may say that "whip" has a different meaning to a chef and an MP if the chef does not know that "whip" can also mean a party leader and the MP does not know that it can denote a whisk and neither knows it also stands for a spanking device. However, it seems unlikely Holland meant to imply that a chef would not be aware of other common uses of the word "whip", only that his first association would most likely be a whisk. Thus, Holland's reasoning shows that we should be wary of assuming that the first association related to a word conclusively defines the word's meaning for a person. It seems the reason why it is tempting to conclude that an association reveals the meaning of a word is the old Augustinian assumption that understanding is a matter of associating a word with its referent, and the object a word stands for is its meaning.

We may begin our examination of Holland's view of rules by asking what it would mean for a rule to be rigid and shared but applied differently. One example could
be a new law. It could be considered rigid in the sense that it is formally defined and shared in the sense that everyone should abide by it. We might say that every judge applies it differently if the sentences in similar cases would vary considerably. Thus the shared practise of applying the law would be missing. In this sense it seems there can be rules that are rigid and shared but applied differently.

However, it also seems that the purpose of rules is to get people to behave in a particular way, and a rule which everyone applies in his or her own manner cannot accomplish this. Therefore, one might expect the practise of applying a rule to be quickly established whenever it is missing. Because a rule which everyone applies in his or her own way does not lead to any regularity in human activities, such rules seem to form a very special, and most likely temporary subcategory of rules. Moreover, such rules can certainly not establish the kind of regularity in definitions and judgements that communication requires (e.g. PI §242, 88). Therefore, Holland seems misguided in assuming that the rules used to determine the meaning of an expression are rigid and shared but applied differently. In order to communicate with words it is not enough to just have rules, people also need to share the way of applying a rule, i.e. have a shared practise of using words (e.g. PI §199, §202, 80-81).

The idea that a conventional interpretation can reflect very different identities also raises the question whether the identity or the convention is a better explanation for the interpretation. If one tries to understand someone's personality, it is perhaps interesting to ponder on how a given convention satisfies his or her needs. But this is not necessarily the best approach when trying to understand language use in general. It seems that when people follow a convention, the existence of the convention is a sufficient explanation for their behaviour. An examination of possible personal motivations seems more fruitful in cases where someone clearly deviates from a convention. Such cases also seem more informative of the person's particular needs. For example, if I consider the line "please pass the salt" in a description of a meal as a request to pass the salt, my understanding of the expression is not necessarily very informative for someone interested in the cravings of my identity. It also seems
unnecessary to assume that this interpretation has any other reason than my knowledge that the phrase "please pass the salt" is usually used in such contexts to ask for the salt.

Before examining the constructivist arguments of Holland and Fish, let us summarise our discussion of Holland thus far. The main merit in Holland's work is that he has called attention to the possibility that readers mould texts according to their characteristic defences and fantasies. I believe such an approach can be fruitful when examining exceptional interpretations or when one has extensive knowledge about a particular person. However, when readers seem to follow a convention, it seems one can consider the convention a sufficient explanation for the readers' conclusions.

Holland's view of language seems to include some common but, as Wittgenstein suggests, misguided notions. In his early work, he suggested that words are essentially dead specks of carbon which gain meaning from the reader's mental operations. In his later work, there are culturally shared rules for determining the meaning of words but everyone applies them differently. Although he assumes that language has a shared basis, he fails to see that this basis cannot come about if readers usually assign meanings to words according to a private logic, such as the dictates of their psychological defence strategies or a personal manner of applying a rule. People can communicate with signs only if they tend to understand them in the same way. This tendency rests on a shared practise of using words, as Wittgenstein repeatedly points out. It is possible that a psychological motivation occasionally leads the reader to deviate from a convention. But, it seems that even an examination of a reader's psychological motivations can only rest on an understanding of the ways in which a given aspect of a text would normally be understood.

1.2.4. Stanley Fish

In *Is There a Text in This Class?*, a collection of articles from 1970 to 1980, one of the main questions Fish addresses is: "Do readers make meanings" (HRP 336) with the aim of showing that Hirsch and Abrams are misguided in defending the objectivity of
interpretation. Fish's main argument is that reading is not a process of decoding or finding an author's intentions, but a process of creating (IV 172-3). Both the formal features of a text and the meanings assigned to them are the product of interpretation (IV 163, 165-167, 172, HRP 329-331). Different interpretive strategies produce different interpretations. In principle, all interpretive strategies are possible and the interpretive community will decide which are acceptable at any given point in time (WMIA 347). An interpretive community consists of people who agree on a point (IV 173). Interpretation is based on learnt conventions, and texts as well as readers are moulded by the same conventions (HRP 329, 332). Because everyone's thinking is limited by the conventions he or she knows, people can never create completely novel or idiosyncratic interpretations (HRP 331). Interpretations are never objective because they are produced from a point of view, but they cannot be subjective either because all available points of view are "social or institutional" (HRP 335). Hence the answer to his initial question is that readers do make meanings but are also themselves shaped by cultural conventions that restrict the meaning creation (HRP 336). As the self is thus constrained, "the arguments of Hirsch, Abrams, and the other proponents of objective interpretation are deprived of their urgency" (HRP 335).

Unfortunately, Fish does not anywhere give a clear definition of the term "interpretive strategy". He suggests that interpretive strategies are ways of looking that produce, for example, line endings (IV 166) or Eskimo meanings in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (WMIA 346). They are also characterised as beliefs (WCA 43), and "a structure of interests and understood goals" which render individual consciousnesses as one immediately forming the same interpretation (HRP 333). Similarly, in YOM he suggests that when he refers to an interpretive community, he is not referring to "a collection of independent individuals who, in a moment of deliberation, choose to employ certain

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4 Abrams criticises the deconstructionists for ignoring the fact that language "is a cultural institution that developed expressly in order to mean something and to convey what is meant to members of a community who have learned how to use and interpret language" ("The Deconstructive Angel" 432). Hirsch argues that it is unethical to ignore an author's intention ("Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics" 259).
interpretive strategies, but rather to a set of practices that are defining of an enterprise and fill the consciousnesses of the enterprise's members" (36, emphasis original). His foreword to part two of Text seems to combine these different aspects of the interpretive strategies as well as suggest what role the rules of language have in communication.

If what follows [from using words] is communication or understanding, it will not be because he [Abrams] and I share a language, in the sense of knowing the meanings of individual words and the rules for combining them, but because a way of thinking, a form of life, shares us, and implicates us in a world of already-in-place objects, purposes, goals, procedures, values and so on; and it is to the features of that world that any words we utter will be heard as necessarily referring. (303-304)

Thus interpretive strategies seem to be practises, beliefs and understood goals; a form of life that necessarily leads the members of a community to the same conclusion. But, the meanings of words and rules of using them are separate from this form of life.

In Fish's view, the fact that interpretation is a matter of applying certain strategies has no practical consequences for teaching and studying literature, though it is relevant for a discussion of the status of the text, the bounds of interpretation, interpretive authority and the role of subjectivity and objectivity (DVP 371). His most recent article "Truth but No Consequences" (TNC) suggests that Fish considers the idea that all evidence depends on interpretive strategies as a metaphysical position that has no consequence to the kind of evidence one might bring forth to support a particular textual interpretation (410-412). The metaphysical discussion should be kept completely separate from the discussion of any actual interpretations (410-11).

In sum, Fish's main point is that the text as well as the conclusions we draw from it are the product of interpretive strategies. When producing the text readers are bound by the conventions that prevail in their community. From these two tenets Fish draws three conclusions: 1) the text disappears as an objective entity (e.g. IV 173), 2) disagreements about the plausibility of different interpretations cannot be settled by referring to the formal features of a text because they are the product of the same interpretive strategy that underlies the interpretation (WMIA 340), and 3) readers cannot
make irresponsible interpretations because they are always constrained by conventions (HRP 335). Furthermore, if two speakers understand each other, it is not because they share the rules of language but because they share a way of thinking. Let us examine these conclusions in more detail.

The first issue that needs to be clarified is the level of generality of the beliefs that form an interpretive strategy. When Fish argues that understanding ensues only if the speakers share the same way of thinking, is he referring to general beliefs about what words can mean in different situations, or the specific set of assumptions behind a particular interpretation? When Fish says that "I say it to you now, knowing full well that you will agree with me (that is, understand) only if you already agree with me" (IV 173), it seems he is referring to a specific set of assumptions related to a specific proposition. Since he suggests that one has to agree with a proposition in order to understand it, he seems to assume that it is not enough to be aware of the assumptions related to the proposition, one also has to believe that they are true. But this is absurd, for people constantly demonstrate that they understand the reasoning of an opposing party although they do not agree with it; a good example is Fish's own argument against Abrams, which I quoted above (Text 303-4). Moreover, if indeed communication is possible only between people who have the same beliefs, it would not be possible to know what the different beliefs of someone else are, because we need to be able to understand the other person in order to find out the person's beliefs (Dasenbrock, 20-23).

If understanding a proposition does not require that one agrees with it, what is understanding based on? Wittgenstein suggests that our understanding of words springs from knowing the shared practises of using words as part of different human activities. It is these shared practises and an understanding of human activities that allow us to express different views and discover whether we agree with them. In this sense our understanding of language relies on a shared way of thinking, but contrary to Fish's suggestion, the rules of language are an integral part of it. An essential part of our knowledge of language is also the awareness that often a word has many different uses. Therefore it seems that regardless of the interpretive community one belongs to, one will
always be aware of various possible interpretations. Interpretation involves making
choices; it is not an activity where a given set of preconceptions inevitably leads to a
particular conclusion, as some of Fish's formulations seem to suggest (e.g. YOM 36, Text
303-304).

If understanding is based on rules of language shared by all speakers of a
language, then Fish seems misguided in suggesting that the text disappears as an
objective entity (e.g. IV 173) and that the plausibility of different readings cannot be
evaluated by looking at the text. It seems the text disappears as an objective entity, i.e.
an entity the formal features of which different observers can agree on, only if the
strategies used to produce these formal features are not shared. But, if formal features
are understood as words and properties of the arrangement of words, such as line
endings or alliteration, we can give very clear rules of how to use these terms. In
Wittgenstein's spirit we might say that one criteria of understanding these terms is the
ability to point them out in a text. Thus we should expect these features to exist
objectively to all those who know the orthographic conventions, can read and know the
rules of using the terms that refer to formal features, such as "line ending" and
"alliteration". Moreover, if the formal features exist objectively to all readers, and our
understanding of words is connected with the practises of using them, then different
readers will always have a common basis against which they can evaluate the plausibility
of alternative interpretations.

Fish's third conclusion was that interpretations cannot be irresponsible
because readers are bound by conventions that limit their thinking. Possibly there are
some limits to our thinking, but they still leave room for various conclusions, as the history
of competing literary interpretations suggests. Moreover, most conventions, and
particularly the conventions relevant for interpreting texts, can be breached. We can
suggest a reading that goes against our understanding of the use to which words are put
in a given text. It seems a discussion of what is responsible essentially tries to define
which of the possible practises should be preferred. As conventions always leave room for different options, Fish seems misguided in suggesting that conventions make it unnecessary to try to define the most desirable practises.

Although Fish perhaps thinks that his position is essentially metaphysical and should be kept separate from actual interpretations (TNC 410-11), an examination of actual interpretations does bring forth some problems in his assumptions. The actual interpretations suggest that it is difficult to explain opposing opinions by suggesting that the readers have produced different formal features or could not have chosen another interpretive strategy. As we will see in the section on opposing opinions, members of opposing parties refer to the same passages. Thus it seems they have made their interpretive decisions at the same points, as Fish’s definition of a formal feature suggests. Moreover, those who suggest an interpretation that opposes the view of the others usually either acknowledge the opposing interpretation or incorporate it in their own view in a milder form. This suggests that the readers do not only make out the words in the same way but also attach similar meanings to them. As the opposing party is aware of an alternative interpretation, it seems its members are not inevitably led to a conclusion because of their interpretive strategy, but rather, choose between two interpretive strategies that both seem possible.

When one tries to sort the readers into interpretive communities according to their interpretations, the problems with this concept become evident. If the interpretive community is understood as in YOM as a set of practises, such as an understanding of what sort of things to pay attention to in a short story, all readers belong to the same community, but this community includes a variety of actual interpretations. If it is defined as the set of beliefs or assumptions that lead to a particular conclusion, or as those who agree, then one runs into the problem that the interpretations overlap to different degrees. One good example is the idea that Coutts fears Winifred. Some readers only

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5 For example, Hirsch suggests that respecting the author's intention should be an "ethical maxim" for professional interpretation (259).
say that he fears Winifred. Some suggest that he fears her because he is aroused by her, and some add the idea that he looses control when he is aroused. In addition to this common interpretation, most answers also contain remarks not made by anyone else. The question then is: do these readers belong to the same interpretive community, does each one form his or her own community, or does each reader have a set of memberships in various communities?

In sum, the main merit in Fish's work is that he draws attention to the role of assumptions in interpretation. An attempt to articulate the assumptions behind a given conclusion would probably show quite clearly how our understanding of language is linked with an understanding of people, and how complicated the web of assumptions can be. Fish should also be credited for emphasising the social nature of interpretation. However, he seems misguided in suggesting that language speakers will understand each other only if they have the same beliefs. Rather, as Wittgenstein suggests, our understanding of language is based on shared practises of using words. Due to these shared practises we can communicate also about views we do not agree with. Moreover, as all speakers of a language share certain sets of rules, the text does not disappear as an objective entity. The actual interpretations also make Fish's assumptions seem questionable. Readers with opposing opinions have paid attention to the same words and acknowledged an alternative interpretation. Hence it seems the assumptions of their community do not lead the readers to see a matter in only one way; rather they choose among different possibilities. The fact that most answers contain both common and individual ideas shows that if an interpretive community in defined as those who agree, it is very difficult to determine which people form an interpretive community because people's interpretations and their assumptions overlap to differing degrees.

Although Holland seems to have been inspired by Fish and thinks Fish's views are "totally in harmony with my own" (Cf 190), his conception of the constructive nature of interpretation differs from Fish's in two important respects, and the purpose to which the argument is put by each theorist is also rather different. In Holland's theory the interpretive strategies are hypotheses and the outcome is the result of an idiosyncratic
process. Interpretation is a process of testing different hypotheses and each individual identity determines which hypothesis best fits its needs. It seems Holland’s aim is to show with this argument that each interpretation is inherently unique in the sense that it is rooted in the needs of a unique identity. In Fish’s theory, an interpretive strategy is a set of assumptions or practices shared by all members of a community and the strategy will, as it seems, lead all members to produce the same, or at least very similar, predetermined outcome. It seems Fish’s main aim is to prove with this argument that the quest for an objective meaning is futile but at the same time unconstrained idiosyncratic interpretations are also impossible. In addition to these differences, Holland also distinguishes between "physiological schemata" that are built into our bodies and learnt "mental feedbacks" (CI 32-33), but Fish does not make any such distinction.

Holland's version of the constructive nature of interpretation has three advantages. First, it seems sensible to distinguish physical perception from the further ponderings on the meaning of perceived stimuli. Second, the assumption that interpretation involves testing hypotheses rather than producing an outcome predetermined by one's presuppositions seems to coincide better with at least my experience of reading. Third, it seems the assumption that a reader's fears and desires can affect the interpretation he or she adopts can be fruitful when examining unusual interpretations. However, one may ask whether as a general approach it is sensible to assume that all interpretations are determined by an individual's fears and desires.

1.2.5. David Bleich

At the heart of David Bleich's "subjective paradigm" is the idea that all knowledge, whether it be mathematical or humanistic, has a subjective motive (SC 65, 99). Natural sciences are no more "objective" than human sciences. Proposed explanations become accepted as knowledge through intersubjective negotiation within a community (e.g. 39,
and the views of all readers are equally valuable. A community's willingness to accept a proposition as knowledge depends on whether the explanation meets the community's current needs (e.g. 39, 65, 67).

Bleich begins his discussion of interpretation by examining Freud's work on the interpretation of dreams. He suggests that rather than disclosing the actual cause of a dream, an interpretation reveals the interpreter's motive to form that interpretation (79). He points out that after examining the case of the "Wolf Man", Freud himself suggested that the interpretation of a dream or a patient's symptoms does not necessarily recover their actual cause. Nevertheless, the interpretation has a healing effect because the patient need no longer be preoccupied with what causes his problems (80-83). From these considerations Bleich concludes that interpretation, in general, is "motivated and organized by the conscious desires created by disharmonious feelings and/or self-images; the goal of these desires is increasing the individual's sense of psychological and social adaptability" (83-84, emphasis original).

Bleich assumes that when confronted with art, the impulse to interpret is triggered by a desire to understand the affect provoked by one's perception of an aesthetic object (39, 96). He uses three concepts to explain our encounters with aesthetic objects: "response", "symbolization" and "resymbolization". Response is the experience of perceiving an object evaluatively (97). The evaluative perception involves converting a real object to a symbolic object, which Bleich calls "symbolization" (98). The conceptualisation of why one perceived the object evaluatively and symbolised it is a "resymbolization" of the experience (98). "Interpretation" should therefore be understood as resymbolisation that is motivated by a subjective urge to understand one's evaluative perception of an object (e.g. 39, 89, 98).

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6 The idea that each reader's views should be equally respected seems to have become the driving force behind Bleich's argumentation in his later work, for example the articles "Intersubjective Reading", "The Changing Reader", "Academic Ideology and the New Attention to Teaching", and "The Materiality of Language and the Pedagogy of Exchange". 
Bleich insists that when discussing art, the participants should be aware that they can only talk about their own symbolisations and resymbolisation of an aesthetic object and not its "assumed factualities" (99, 111). A "collective similarity" in perceptions can be established only by negotiating individual responses (98). This requirement is based on "the ordinary fact that when each person says what he sees, each statement will be substantially different" (98). Thus Bleich joins Fish and Holland in emphasising the constructive nature of perception. It seems he also joins Holland in the belief that due to its constructive nature, each person's perception is essentially different, although it is possible to find similarities in these "substantially different" statements.

The personal symbolisations can be shared with the aid of response statements. The response statements should "record the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations" (147). He later points out that the most "negotiable" response statements treat "perception, affect and associations to personal relationships" as one unit (168) and should thus record all of these. The response statements will be taken to represent the "story this reader read" (148). Reading one's response statement will give an awareness of the feelings related to the experience (148). The reader should then try to recall personal events where he or she has felt the same feeling (151).

Recalling such events is related to Bleich's assumption that everyone has an "idiosyncratic language system determined by the relationships in which his language developed" (149).7 Bleich assumes that in addition to being aware of shared meanings of words, we have memories of important interpersonal situations where we have heard the word or used it, and these memories define the most important meaning a word

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7 The idea that everyone speaks his or her own version of a language which is influenced by "interpersonal relations" (IR 419) or "family, community, and individual history" (TML 137) remains a central argument also in Bleich's later work. However, there is an interesting development in his attitude towards Wittgenstein's philosophy. In his 1986 article, Bleich criticises Wittgenstein's notion of the "form of life" as not being sufficiently social (IR 406), in his 2001 article, he praises Wittgenstein for introducing Western thinkers to the idea that understanding language "is not separable from the behaviors of real human groups" through his notion of language as a form of life (TML 121-122).
carries for us (148-9). In order to fully understand our response to a text, we need to recover the subjective definitions of the affect words in our response statements (150). This can be done by examining memories and thoughts that appear in conjunction with writing the response statement (150). Since Bleich does not believe that unconscious motivations control such thoughts and free associations, he grants that all of them may not be related to the feeling. The determining factor is whether the respondent feels a memory defines the feeling (150). With the aid of the response statements a community can then proceed to develop knowledge in a responsible way through intersubjective negotiation (e.g. 296).

Hence, according to Bleich's theory, we should understand the interpretations in this survey as the readers' attempts to explain disquieting emotions related to the reading experience. Although Bleich's theory is interesting, it seems open to the following challenges. First, one may question whether reading always evokes disharmonious feelings and a desire to understand them. It also seems questionable whether reading experiences involve associations to personal life to the extent Bleich's response statements suggest, and whether the feelings and associations found through free association would have been part of the reading experience if the reader had not intentionally searched for them. Moreover, although responses have a central role in Bleich's theory, he does not explain what governs these responses. The inferences Bleich draws from the response statements sometimes seem rather far-fetched, and it seems the readers' conclusions could often be explained just as well with the common meanings of words. Finally, Bleich's notion of idiosyncratic language systems is problematic. I will examine each of these problems in more detail.

One of the main shortcomings in Bleich's theory is that although he thinks interpretations of texts are in fact interpretations of responses to texts (125), he does not examine what the relationship between these responses and the words on the page is. For example, if I feel sad when reading a description of a funeral, Holland could explain this with my psychological defences and fantasies. In Wittgenstein's framework one could suggest that through my linguistic training and understanding of people in my
culture, I have learnt to consider funerals sad events. Because Bleich stresses subjective concerns, the words on the page seem to have a secondary role in his theory, but it remains unclear what exactly is the supposed relationship between words, concerns, emotions and interpretations. As there are various possible ways to answer this question, among them those suggested by Holland and Wittgenstein, Bleich should have discussed the question more thoroughly.

Another problem is that the inferences Bleich draws from the response statements sometimes seem quite far-fetched and the meanings his readers find in the works could very well be explained with the shared meanings of words. Bleich's analysis of Ms. K's reading of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* is a good example. Ms. K thinks that *The Blithedale Romance* is about the "fundamental problems of the roles and nature of man and woman" (215). In her view, the book suggests that women are meant to be submissive Priscillas (216-217). Bleich thinks Ms. K interpreted the work thus because the reading experience involved conflicting masculine and feminine feelings (222, 226). For example, the scene where Coverdale looks at Zenobia through a window reminds Ms. K of how she and the neighbour's children used to peep at each other through windows in her childhood (223). In Bleich's view, Ms. K here identifies with "masculine intrusive watching" (ibid.). An indication of her feminine feelings is that she identifies with Priscilla's tendency to worship hero figures (ibid.). Bleich concludes that Ms. K "thus perceives herself through Coverdale in passive and active terms, masculine and feminine, judging and judged" (ibid.).

Possibly Bleich's inferences are correct, and the reading experience involved conflicting masculine and feminine feelings in Ms. K for the reasons Bleich suggests. Yet, it is not clear why recognising that one has done similar things as a male character would indicate "masculine" feelings that disturb one's sense of femininity. This might be more plausible if the activity was something women very rarely do, but looking at people through windows seems a rather gender neutral pastime. The same applies to other matters where Ms. K identifies with Coverdale, for example, hating to wake up early or enjoying a forest hideaway (223). It seems Ms. K's view of the novel might just as well
and perhaps even more plausibly be explained with the shared meanings of words. For example, the roles of women and men seem to be the centre of attention in the scene at Eliot's Pulpit, which Ms. K singles out as the "key" to the novel (SC 216).

Bleich argues that the "objective meaning based on certain sharing and certain knowledge of generic forms, is a trivial occasion for interpretation", the important part is the "motives and processes developed by the interpreter(s) on the interpretive occasion" (SC 95-6). But in cases where the reader's conclusions can be explained with the trivial meanings of words that we expect most people to agree on, is it sensible to assume that personal motives have to be involved as well?

The assumption that all reading experiences involve disharmonious feelings and evoke a desire to understand one's response also seems questionable. If indeed there are such disharmonious feelings, they seem to remain unconscious most of the time. Perhaps reading experiences that evoke very strong emotions might create conscious disharmonious feelings and an urge to explain them, but such occasions are rather rare, at least in my experience. Moreover, one's interpretation of a text does not necessarily make one's response seem sensible. The urge to understand one's emotional response is probably strongest when one perceives a discrepancy between one's interpretation of a text and one's emotional response to it.

For example, imagine that someone begins to cry at the end of a comedy where two lovers get married. The person thinks that this is a happy ending for the story, but yet she cannot stop her tears. If she thinks about the matter, she might discover, for example, that she is sad because she fears she will never get happily married. In this case, the person's interpretation of the text does not alone explain her emotional response. In order to understand it, one has to understand this reader's fears. It seems

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8 For example, most readers would probably think these words uttered by Hollingsworth suggest that in his view women should be submissive creatures. "Her place is at man's side [sic]. Her office, that of the sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning believer [...] All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be, false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best [...] woman is a monster [...] without man as her acknowledged principal! [...] were there any possible prospect of woman's taking the social stand [...] which these petticoat monstrosities have in view, I would call upon my own sex to use its physical force, that unmistakable evidence of sovereignty, to scourg[e] them back within their proper bounds!" (Hawthorne 123-4)
the explanation Bleich proposes works only when a person's emotional response and interpretation fit cultural notions of appropriate response for the situation suggested by the interpretation. Often this is the case, which is why it may seem sensible to assume that the object of "textual" interpretation is in fact the response. However, there are also situations where readers are genuinely puzzled by their response because it does not fit their understanding of the text. Therefore the interpretation of words on the page and the interpretation of one's emotional response are two different things.

The data collected for this survey and my own experiences also suggest that spontaneous associations with personal life are rather rare. With spontaneous associations I mean associations that are immediate rather than deliberately searched for. Therefore, it seems the method Bleich recommends for recording response statements may distort the representation of reading experiences. When I read the texts in this study, I spontaneously associated personal memories only with text A. I felt the situations described in texts B and C were rather far from my own experiences, and mainly wondered whether there are many men in real life who feel like the male characters in these stories. Yet, when I started recording my response statement for text B in the manner recommended by Bleich, my free associations soon led to memories of "disharmonious" personal experiences, though I had not thought about them the first ten to twenty times I had read the story.

For example, when I read about the sergeant's interaction with the other soldiers (RiH 238-242), the word "outsider" came to my mind. I could easily recognise that feeling like an outsider is a familiar feeling for me. Because I do not look like the average Finn, people constantly assume I am a foreigner and treat me accordingly. Though it can be amusing, it also makes me sad because I feel I am a stranger even in my own country.

Now the crucial question is: was this memory hovering in the back of my mind the twenty times I read the story and did it determine how I understood it? Or, do I consider the sergeant an outsider because of my understanding of the shared meanings of words and human behaviour, and can then connect his situation with a personal
experience if I start to look for one? I think both explanations are possible. This study cannot settle the matter, but the scarcity of references to personal life in my data suggests that Bleich's method may give a misleading impression of the frequency and role of associations to personal life in reading experiences.  

Finally, I would like to question Bleich's concept of the idiosyncratic language system. Bleich suggests that a child learns the meaning of an affect word when a parent names the feeling, for example by suggesting that the child is jealous (149). The link between the feeling and the word is formed through the parent's ostensive definition. Bleich also suggests that "dictionary definitions first attain certitude in our minds when we recall familiar circumstances in which the word applies" (ibid.). Hence memories of situations where the word applies are samples that help us to use the word. As a person learns to apply the word in other situations, he or she forgets the situation where the word was first learnt (149-150). Free associations related to the word, or in the case of affect words, associations related to the affect, are supposed to bring these memories back. Thus in Bleich's view, some use of a word has a special status for us due to the situation in which we have learnt the word. Therefore our language system is idiosyncratic although we also know other common uses of the word. From this he draws the conclusion that private etymologies are necessary for "fully" identifying one's response (150) and for understanding what another person means to say (178-9).  

The first observation one might make is that even if some use (or meaning) of a word had a special status for a person due to the situation in which it was learnt, this would not by itself render the person's language idiosyncratic, if with "idiosyncratic" we

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9 One factor that may affect the readers' tendency to connect a text with their personal life is their educational background. However, as Bleich's subjects were students from his literature classes, it seems they have been trained to take a certain amount of distance from the text, and it is particularly this tendency that Bleich has wanted to overcome with his method. The question then is: does Bleich's method bring us closer to the true reading experience, or does it generate associations that would not have been part of the experience had the reader not deliberately tried to connect the text with personal experiences.

10 This analysis and critique of the idiosyncratic definitions of words in Bleich's theory largely rests on Baker and Hacker's analysis of the role of ostensive definitions and samples in Wittgenstein's view of language in *AC* I 168-205.
mean that the person's language is "highly individualized or eccentric" COD 586. This conclusion would be warranted only if a) the use that has a special status is substantially different from the way other people use the word, and b) the instance of being introduced to the use that has a special status would somehow block the person from learning other uses of the word.

Bleich makes neither claim, rather the opposite, but still he insists, for example, that the meaning of the word "jealousy" is different for a single child and for someone who had siblings because in the former case, the feeling was directed towards parents, and in the latter towards siblings (149). What this suggestion overlooks is that jealousy can also be directed, for example, towards friends, colleagues, or animals, and it can spring from wanting someone's attention or their qualities. Like Holland, Bleich here forgets that "jealousy" has several uses. In order to be a competent speaker of the language, the single child and the child with siblings need to learn all (or at least most) of these uses. To accomplish this they will probably need several ostensive and other definitions, which makes it unlikely that the "meaning" of a word is ever learnt on one instance of ostensive pointing. Moreover, if Bleich's view of idiosyncratic meanings is correct, then it seems that a single child who has read a description of the way one sibling locked another sibling away in order to be with the parent could not consider this an act of jealousy because for him or her "jealousy" means a feeling directed towards parents. However, it seems unlikely Bleich would be willing to follow his assumptions to this conclusion.

It is possible that different people are aware of a different amount of uses for a given word and in this sense the vocabulary of different individuals varies. But, as long as the uses one knows are common uses, one's language system is not eccentric. Moreover, differences in one's knowledge of the possible uses of a word become relevant only when one is unaware of the use to which the word is put in the expression in question. For example, if I think "bank" can only mean a financial institution, this will not make a difference to my understanding of a text until I encounter an expression where "bank" is used to refer to river banks.
Bleich also seems to forget the fact that if an ostensive definition is to be helpful as a guide for further use of the word, it must use a sample that is typical and representative (AC I 186). Therefore, we should expect the samples readers might find to be very typical instances of using the word. If they would not be typical, we would most likely not find them helpful either. For example, imagine that person A suggests her sample of sadness is the moment her dog died and person B suggests that her sample is sunbathing. In person A’s case we might feel we have gained an insight on what the person means. In person B's case we would probably feel quite confused and want more information since it is not clear why sunbathing should make one sad. If the person insisted that for her "sad" means simply sunbathing with no further qualification, we would probably conclude that she does not understand the word. The samples can only confirm that we agree or disagree on one use of a word. Thus it seems the insight the samples can give is much less profound than Bleich assumes and his insistence on knowing them seems misguided.

A further problem with the idea that our use of words is guided by the first ostensive definition is that people forget this situation, and the responses of Bleich's subjects suggest that they cannot recall it either, at least not with the method he proposes. His students refer to situations where they have felt in a similar way as when reading the text or to situations that the text reminds them of, but none of them report situations where they learnt the word. If we cannot remember the situation where a parent first named our feeling, and thus introduced us to the custom of using the word, how can this situation be the most important sample that guides our use of the word? As Baker and Hacker point out, the ostensive definition is best understood as a rule that establishes a standard of correctness for using a word (AC I 178). It is not plausible to assume that people guide their use of language by rules and standards of correctness that are hidden from them (Language 266, 313).

The problem with the assumption that one needs to know the private etymologies of the words a person uses in order to understand that person is that it denies the possibility of shared understanding. The only means of explaining the
etymologies are words, but in order to understand the explanation it seems we should know the etymologies of words in the explanation, and so on in an infinite regress. People may have private associations related to words and knowing these may help other people to understand how they have understood an expression and particularly why they have a certain emotion related to it, but this does not mean that everyone has an idiosyncratic language system. The communication of one's understanding of an expression and one's feelings is based on the shared meanings of words. It seems Bleich has confused explaining one's reaction with explaining what one means with particular words. For example, if I get angry when reading a description of how a child is bullied at school and then suggest that it reminds me of a similar personal experience, this may help others to understand my emotional response. But, what is at issue here is not what I mean with the word "angry", but why I should feel that way.11

It seems Bleich actually uses the personal associations to infer emotional reactions and causes for these emotional reactions, but for some reason he has connected this pursuit with the idea that everyone has an idiosyncratic language system. This is particularly curious because he could have looked for emotional reactions and explanations for them without assuming that everyone has an idiosyncratic language system. Moreover, even if we accepted the assumption that people's language systems are idiosyncratic in the sense that one (common) use of a word has a special status for a person, it is not at all clear how this is supposed to affect the person's understanding of a text. Bleich does not say, for example, that people understand texts differently because the use that has a special status in a person's language system varies from person to person, only that knowing the private etymology of the word is necessary for understanding its functional meaning in a response statement (SC 149). This is connected with recovering the "motives and processes developed by the interpreter"

11 The situation is similar with the idea that one needs to recall the situation where an affect word is learnt in order to identify the affect. If I start to cry while reading, I normally would not need to recall the countless situations where I have cried in order to identify my response as sadness. Such recollections might help to understand why I feel sad by offering examples of things that have made me sad previously, but they are rarely necessary for me to identify my emotion.
(96), which Bleich considers the main task of subjective criticism. Bleich's emphasis on motives and processes as the primary explanatory factor for a reader's understanding echoes the Augustinian assumption that understanding words is essentially a *process* (rather than an ability), and independent of the practise of using words. It seems that the desire to discover the processes has led Bleich to postulate an idiosyncratic language system without actually explaining what impact it has on the processes.

To sum up, the main merit in Bleich's work is that he draws attention to the fact that associations to personal life and subjective motives can influence interpretation. The data do support the idea that spontaneous associations to personal life can colour a reader's interpretation. However, as such instances are rather rare, it is questionable whether spontaneous associations to personal life are as big a part of reading experiences as Bleich's response statements suggest. It also seems questionable whether disharmonious feelings and an urge to calm them are the driving force behind all interpretation. The inferences Bleich draws in his analyses are sometimes rather far-fetched, and as his theory stresses the subjectivity of interpretation, it is unclear how one should explain the similarity in interpretations in his framework. The data suggest that people with very different emotional responses have formed similar interpretations, and thus the relationship between the emotional response and the interpretation seems anything but clear-cut.

Bleich's notion of idiosyncratic language systems seems to spring from misunderstanding the role of ostensive definitions and samples in language acquisition and use. It also ignores two of Wittgenstein's central observations. First, words usually have several different uses, and second, our understanding of signs is related to the practise of using them. Thus it seems that despite his acquaintance with Wittgenstein's work, Bleich has not taken heed of many of the insights offered by Wittgenstein's analyses.
1.2.6. Wolfgang Iser

The last theorist I want to discuss is Wolfgang Iser. Iser's reasoning begins with the observation that since interpretation is necessary to bring out the meaning of a text, the meaning cannot already be in the text (AR 18\textsuperscript{12}). At the same time he holds onto the commonsense idea that if a text is to communicate something, it must in some way control the way in which it is understood (167). Thus he concludes that a fictional text is an entity that contains instructions for producing its intended object (107, 35). Literary research should concentrate on examining what happens between a reader and a text, and outlining "the conditions that bring about [the work's] various possible effects" (18).

Closely related to the idea that meaning cannot be in the text is the idea that "[m]eaning is at a level of language where words do not belong" (Smith as quoted in AR 120). Since "meaning is not manifested in words", "the apprehension of the text is dependent on gestalt groupings" (ibid.). Gestalts depend on the autocorrelation\textsuperscript{13} of signs, i.e. a connection that exists prior to perception and independently of a reader's disposition (ibid.). Identifying the connections between signs is done largely unconsciously through passive syntheses (135), and the basic elements in passive syntheses are images (136).

While creating, or perhaps one should say identifying, the gestalt, the reader is constrained and guided by the following factors. First, autocorrelation prevents readers from projecting their own meanings on texts (120). Second, the passive syntheses are "guided by signals which 'project' themselves into [the reader]" (135). Third, Iser assumes that in reading "we think the thoughts of another person" (126). Fourth, the reader may be led to produce inconsistencies in the gestalts (130). The effort to resolve such discrepancies heightens the reader's involvement in the text (131). As a result the

\textsuperscript{12} All references to Iser's views in this discussion are to The Act of Reading unless indicated otherwise.

\textsuperscript{13} Iser has borrowed many of his key terms from various sources. "Autocorrelation" is a term borrowed from Moles, and "passive syntheses" is borrowed from Husserl. The idea that readers think the thoughts of another person is borrowed from Poulet. "Theme" and "horizon" are borrowed from Alfred Schütz.
reader's habitual views recede in the background, which allows the reader to have a new experience that "restructures" his or her past experiences (131-2), and helps the reader to "see himself being guided from without" (134). Moreover, forming a gestalt always means choosing one interpretation among many possibilities. The excluded possibilities remain in the background challenging the chosen interpretation and in this way constrain and guide the gestalt formation (126). Because a literary text can never be grasped at once, the reader travels with a wandering viewpoint through different perspectives offered by the text. The perspective on which the reader concentrates on a particular moment is the theme (97). The reader's attitude towards the theme is conditioned by the previous perspectives in which he or she has been situated. This background is called the horizon (97). Differences in the ability to remember previous parts of the text can cause differences in interpretation, but essentially the perspectives form an intersubjective structure which constrains and guides the reader (118).

The reader's active involvement in the text is initiated by indeterminacy. In Iser's view there are two types of indeterminacy. First, since a literary text does not present real objects, the reader cannot verify whether his or her understanding of a text is correct by referring to an outside reality ("Indeterminacy" 8). This gives rise to a particular kind of indeterminacy that distinguishes literature from all other forms of writing (ibid.). Second, indeterminacy can be enhanced with structural elements, such as blanks. Blanks are indeterminate connections between elements of the text, which induce a reader to participate in forming the imaginary object by filling them in (AR 182). Differences in interpretations arise if the reader fills the blanks "exclusively" with his or her own projections (167) instead of letting the text work on him or her (153).

Together the blanks, perspectives and other structural elements form "a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp a text" (34). This structure Iser calls the implied reader. It both conditions the reception of the text and allows infinite possibilities of concretising the work. Thus, if we wanted to conceptualise the answers in this study in Iser's framework, we could say that each answer represents one realization of the potential offered by the text. The differences in the answers are due
to subjective differences in remembering previous parts of the text as the reader's wandering viewpoint travelled through the perspectives offered by the text. Occasionally a reader may also have projected his or her subjective norms on the text to reduce its indeterminacy ("Indeterminacy" 8). The similarity in the answers is due to the autocorrelation of signs which forms the intersubjectively valid structure of the text. The "fact" that the readers have been thinking the thoughts of another person has also guided their gestalt formation. Discrepancies in the gestalts produced by the readers have also led them to see how they are guided by the text.

The main problem in Iser's theory is that he is unable to explain how the text controls reading as Stanley Fish (Wiser) and Dagmar Barnouw have pointed out. This seems to spring largely from his assumption that "meaning is at a level of language where words do not belong" (AR 120). The idea that we are thinking the thoughts of another person during reading seems to be based on a misguided notion of thinking and reading. The assumption that literature has a particular kind of indeterminacy because it does not refer to real objects could also be questioned. I shall examine each one of these claims separately.

In Iser's notion that meaning is not connected to words, and his suggestions that image building is the essential means of apprehension, we encounter two assumptions from the Augustinian picture of language. This calls to mind the following observation made by Wittgenstein.

§503. If I give anyone an order I feel it to be quite enough to give him signs. And I should never say: this is only words, and I have got to get behind the words. Equally, when I have asked someone something and he gives me an answer (i.e. a sign) I am content—that was what I expected—and I don't raise the objection: but that's a mere answer.

§504. But if you say: "How am I to know what he means, when I see nothing but the signs he gives?" then I say: "How is he to know what he means, when he has nothing but the signs either?" (Pl p. 139, emphasis original)

Words are arbitrary in the sense that a group of people can choose whatever combination of letters to stand for a particular thing. However, once they have laid down the rules of
using that sign, either through formal definitions or by regularly using it in a particular way, their understanding of the sign will be connected to these rules. As for the role of images in understanding, these may or may not accompany understanding, but as Wittgenstein points out, images are not a necessary criterion of understanding. The criterion of understanding is the way the person explains or paraphrases an expression; whether the person also has an image in his or her mind is quite inessential.

If Iser would have started from the assumption that our understanding of words is related to the rules guiding their use, his idea of autocorrelation and the assumption that signs project themselves into the reader's mind would also have a more solid basis. Autocorrelation, i.e. the connection between signs that exists prior to a reader's disposition, could be explained with the rules of language that are shared by those who speak the language. Indeed, it is very difficult to understand what else such a connection could rely on. It seems potentially misleading to think of signs as entities that "project" themselves into a reader's mind, but despite the unfortunate formulation, the gist of this suggestion seems to be that the sign somehow controls (or affects) the way it is understood. Again it seems Wittgenstein's idea that our understanding of a sign is connected with the rules that guide its use seems to be the best way to explain how a sign affects the way it is understood.

The idea that people think the thoughts of another person while reading also seems rather curious. Iser does not explain it further, but Poulet offers the following rationale. A thought always needs a thinking subject, and while I read, I become the thinking subject of the thoughts expressed in a text. Poulet points out that "[w]henever I read, I mentally pronounce an I, and yet the I which I pronounce is not myself" (56). What this conception ignores is that "the focal range of the phrase 'to express one's thoughts' is in the area of expressing one's opinions, reflections, and ruminations" (AC III 334). The mere fact that I utter a sentence $S$ which expresses the thought $p$ does not mean that I think $p$. I can utter a sentence audibly or repeat words silently in my mind when reading, but it does not follow that I think the thoughts the words express (AC III 333). Rather than being a process where the author's consciousness fills my own as Poulet suggests (58),
reading is analogous to hearing someone express *his or her* thoughts, memories and experiences. *My* thoughts are the judgments, observations and conclusions I draw from the words I read (*AC III* 334).

The assumptions related to indeterminacy are also problematic as Fish points out in "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser" (*Wlser*). Fish suggests that the distinction between "given" elements in the text or the world and "supplied" connections does not hold (6). In his view, nothing is ever given. Our perception of the real world and human beings involves interpretation just as our understanding of literature does (9-10).

Iser answers by elucidating the differences between the concepts of given, determinate and indeterminate in his theory. For example, in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, the name "Allworthy" is given. The meaning the reader attaches to this name is determinate. The connection between the meaning assigned to "Allworthy" and the meaning assigned to some other given such as "Blifil's piety" is indeterminate (*TLW* 84). Furthermore, Iser stresses that the difference between fiction and the real world is that the latter is open to the senses, while the former is open to the imagination only.

Unfortunately, Iser's clarifications do not manage to counter the criticism. Even this new account of the distinction between the given, determinate and indeterminate fails to explain how the text can guide the reader. The "given" words can guide the reader only if the manner of assigning "determinate" meanings to them is shared. Apparently Iser assumes that this is the case, but his theory does not explain why readers should "assign" the same meanings to words. However, if we accept Wittgenstein's suggestion that the way words are understood is related to the rules of using them, we can assume that due to habit, training and a shared understanding of people, readers tend to understand expressions similarly. This would explain how the text can guide the reader, but it also leaves the reader the freedom to follow a different path.

I also agree with Fish that there is not a clear distinction between the kind of interpretation required to understand real world phenomena and fictional situations (*Wlser* 8). Iser argues that the difference between the real world and the fictional world is that the real world is also open to the senses whereas the fictional world exists only in the
imagination (TLW 83). But does our understanding of real life phenomena necessarily rely on direct perception? It seems our understanding of many real world phenomena relies on imagination and the same kind of reasoning that is used in interpreting a situation described in a text. For example, my understanding of what it is like to be beaten, imprisoned or seriously starved is based on imagination, and I hope I will never get direct perceptual data of these conditions. Moreover, even if I witness an argument between a couple, I may have the same difficulties in understanding why they are quarrelling as someone who reads a description of the event.

It seems the indeterminacy of literary texts has three main reasons. The first reason is that most words have several different uses as Wittgenstein suggests. The second reason is that when reading a text, one cannot usually ask the author what he or she means every time one finds the text ambiguous. Thirdly, often authors deliberately refrain from explaining the actions of their heroes or use structural elements to increase the indeterminacy of the text—just as Iser encourages them to do.

In sum, Iser's basic assumption that the text guides readers seems sensible, and it is also supported by the agreement in the readers' answers. I also believe that the concepts theme, horizon and wandering viewpoint can be useful in examining the composition of texts and when analysing how a reader may have reached a particular conclusion. However, because Iser assumes that meaning is essentially separate from words, he fails to explain how the text can guide readers.

1.2.7. Theoretical conclusions

All of these theorists point out factors that can be relevant for understanding responses. It can be useful to examine what psychological needs or subjective motivations could be behind a particular interpretation, as Holland and Bleich respectively suggest. Fish's approach invites us to analyse interpretations in terms of the assumptions they involve, which can also be an illuminating exercise. Iser should be credited for pointing out that reading is like a journey through different impressions, and one's final conclusion
depends on the way one relates these impressions to each other. However, their reasoning related to the nature of language and understanding often shows that they have not taken into account some very basic features of language.

For example, when arguing that words have a different meaning to different people, both Holland and Bleich seem to forget that a word typically has several different uses. Therefore, the observation that two people may first think of different uses of a word does not warrant the conclusion that the word has a different meaning for each one, as Holland suggests. Neither can we conclude that if one common use of a word has a special status for a person, the person's language system is idiosyncratic, as Bleich argues. There may be some variation in people's knowledge of the possible uses of a word, but as long as the uses they know are common, such variations amount only to differences in linguistic competence. It does not follow that each person has an eccentric language system.

The fact that words have different uses also seems relevant for Fish's conception of the interpretive strategy. If interpretive strategies are the beliefs according to which we assign meanings to words, we should expect these beliefs to include an awareness of the different uses a word can have. As a result the members of an interpretive community should always be aware of more than one possible interpretation, which makes it implausible to assume that an interpretive strategy necessarily produces a particular interpretation as a matter of course. It seems that interpretation is always a matter of choosing between different possibilities. Finally, the multiple uses of a word are a much more relevant cause for the indeterminacy of literary texts than the fact that the fictional world is not open to the senses, as Iser suggests.

All of these theorists also have some questionable views about the way in which the meanings of words and the rules of language are related to understanding. Fish suggests that communication does not rest on sharing the rules of language but on sharing a way of thinking that necessarily leads to assigning the same meaning to the words. The fact that he seems to equate understanding with agreement suggests that we can only comprehend views we agree with. But clearly we can also understand
propositions we do not agree with. Thus understanding cannot be based on having exactly the same particular beliefs as another speaker, but sharing an understanding of the common practises of using words. It is these practises that form the rules of language, and it is these practises that give words their meaning and guide people when they try to determine which use is in question.

Similarly, when Iser suggests that meanings are on a separate level than words, he fails to see that the meaning of a word is its use. When Holland argues that the rules of language are rigid but people apply them differently, he forgets that the purpose of a rule is to establish a common practise. A rule that everyone applies in his or her own manner might just as well not exist. We can use signs in communication only insofar as there exists a common practise of using them.

Because our theorists conceive of meanings as something mental that readers couple with words as they read, they end up emphasising various processes. Iser suggests that comprehension is a process of forming mental images, Holland concentrates on brain processes and psychological processes of defence and fantasy formation, and Bleich insists that instead of the trivial meanings of words, we should be interested in the processes and motivations of the reader. However, as Wittgenstein points out, there may be all sorts of processes and images that accompany understanding, but understanding itself is not a process. We are very accustomed to thinking that once we discover the process, we will understand the outcome. But when related to language, this line of thinking ignores the fact that language use is a rule-governed activity, and the criteria of understanding is the ability to perform according to the rules. It is quite conceivable that when two people are given the order "please point out the red chair", their brain processes are different, they have different motivations to obey the order and one of them has an image in his mind while the other one does not, but still both of them point at the same red chair. If they do point at the same chair, we will say that they have both understood. Thus Wittgenstein tries to show us that our great faith in the explanatory power of processes is partly misplaced when related to language.
If we are to abandon the processes as our primary object of interest, what can Wittgenstein offer in return? Wittgenstein can offer us a tenable framework for understanding how a text can guide a reader and what the limitations of its guiding power are. If we approach literary responses from a Wittgensteinian perspective, our starting point is that our understanding of words rests on our knowledge of the common practises of using words and our knowledge of people. We can assume that most readers who master a language are aware of the most common uses of words, and tend to react to signs in the same way as a result of their linguistic training. However, as a word typically has many different uses, it is possible to understand words in different ways. Sometimes the readers may also be unfamiliar with a convention or decide to go against it.

Therefore the first thing to determine is whether the readers seem to follow a convention. When readers form similar conclusions that fit the conventional meanings of words, we can assume that due to their linguistic training and understanding of people, they have formed a similar understanding of sense in which the word is used. We can assume that differences arise if readers choose not to follow a convention, do not recognise it, are not familiar with it, have paid attention to different parts of the text or have a different understanding of the human activity. Such deviations can be, for example, accidental, psychologically motivated, or due to differences in personal experiences, cultural background or education. Hence, Wittgenstein does not offer us one principle that will explain each particular interpretation. Rather, he suggests that the factors that can explain differences in people's views are manifold, and we need to resort to our own understanding of people to see which explanation is most plausible in a given situation.

In this framework, we do not need to know a person's life history to understand why the person has formed a conventional conclusion, but it may become relevant if the person seems to be familiar with common conventions and still goes against them. We can also assume that people can understand each other even if they do not agree, and allow the possibility that all the meanings a reader finds in a text may not reflect his or her personal concerns. Finally, we can assume that when people read
texts, they form an understanding of different possibilities, and as speakers of the same language have something in common even if they disagree on the plausibility of different interpretations.

1.3. The study

In this section I would like to introduce the participants, the texts used and the method of collecting the data in my empirical study. I did not design the study to test any particular reader-response theory, rather the study was based on my own assumptions of what sort of matters could be of interest when one tries to understand the way readers interpret literature. Originally I was particularly interested in seeing what kind of attitudes and beliefs about men the answers would reveal. However, when I began examining the answers from the point of view of the theories of Holland, Bleich, Fish and Iser, I soon discovered that the proper treatment of this question would be a thesis in itself. Therefore, an analysis that concentrates on the readers' views of men will be left for future work.

I was interested in seeing whether and how gender consciousness might have moulded the views of men in my generation and therefore I chose young educated Finns as my target group. I received completed questionnaires from twenty-seven Finnish university students or graduates whose age range was between nineteen and thirty-six at the time the answers were collected in 1999 and 2000. Three of them studied literature, ten studied either Finnish or some foreign language and fourteen were in some other field. I presume most of the fourteen readers in the "other" group studied either arts or social sciences because my notices were posted in places frequently visited by these students, but they could be in some other field also, and I know two of them had a technical education. Eleven participants are men and sixteen are women. Five of the participants are friends, six are colleagues from a translation agency in which I work, two are acquaintances from courses or student associations and fourteen are people who contacted me on the basis of notices I had posted in the university buildings or sent on
mailing lists of student organisations. I did not meet any of the fourteen participants I did not know beforehand. As ten of the participants have a linguistic training, the material offers an opportunity to examine how such a background may affect interpretation. Since there are both male and female participants, one can also examine how gender affects interpretation.

The responses were given anonymously apart from two close friends. I asked the answers to be given anonymously firstly because some of the questions touched on delicate issues and I thought the readers would feel more comfortable answering them anonymously. The second reason was that I did not want any preconceptions about their personality to affect my understanding of their answers. When I received the answers, I mixed them up and labelled each participant with a number. As I was not quite sure whether I would get all the questionnaires back, I reserved the numbers between 1 and 19 to men and the numbers from 20 onwards to women. Hence the labels range from 1 to 35 although there are only twenty-seven participants. I believe the measures taken to mask the identity of each particular respondent and the fact that I have not met fourteen of the participants ensure that preconceptions about their personalities have not affected my understanding of their answers. On the other hand, this method precludes the possibility of comparing the readers' answers with prior knowledge of their personalities, apart from the two close friends.

I chose short stories as texts because reading them does not demand a lot of time and it is therefore easier to ask the same reader to comment on several texts. I wanted to get answers to several texts from each reader in order to see whether the answers are similar in a way that could be explained by the reader's personality or personal concerns. The first text (text A) is D. H. Lawrence's "The Witch à la Mode". I chose this text mainly because I wanted to see how the readers would react to a male character who tries to weigh the benefits of "the old, manly superiority" against the fascinating "sense of freedom, of intimacy" (WàM 101) connected with a less stable position. The second text (text B) is Peter Taylor's "Rain in the Heart". The protagonist in this text is a sensitive family man who suffers from a split between home and work, and
feels a sense of alienation amid the coarse joking of other soldiers. I wanted to see how the readers would respond to this character who seems to have many characteristics of the new "soft" man—or perhaps it is easier to say that the character lacks many characteristics of the traditional male stereotype. The third text (text C) is Milan Kundera's "The Hitchhiking Game". This text was chosen because it offered an opportunity to discuss aggression towards women. One criterion in choosing these texts was also the fact that I thought all of them had interesting female characters. I chose texts that describe romantic relationships because I believe gender roles are often accentuated in them.

The texts were presented in the given order because I felt both texts A and C were provocative from a gender point of view, and I thought a somewhat provocative text would raise the reader's initial interest, and would help to maintain it to the end when the reader may start to feel tired of writing his or her answers. Text B was placed in the middle because I thought that the different mood and protagonist in this text could balance the irritation that text A might provoke and give a sense of variety, which would help to keep up the readers' interest. I also thought that if the readers would read two provocative stories one after the other, they might find the study very prejudiced and either lose interest or concentrate on this prejudice rather than their own views of the stories.

The stories that the readers received were edited in such a way that the title and the author's name were left out and line numbers were added to facilitate references to the text. The title was missing to make it more difficult to identify the story, and the author's name was not given because I wanted to see whether the readers would assume the text was written by a man or a woman. As the author's name and the title are often considered important contextual clues, the setup is thus artificial in the sense that this information is missing. The readers also received one questionnaire for each text (questionnaires A, B and C), one background questionnaire (questionnaire D), instructions and an envelope for returning the answers.
In the instructions the readers were asked to read the texts in their own pace as many times as they liked and answer the questions preferably on the same day. They were asked to complete the survey within five days, if possible, in order to make sure that they still remembered all the texts well when answering questionnaire D. They could write their answers in either English or Finnish. They were asked to indicate passages that a particular impression was based on and warned against looking at the questions with quotations in section B. They were also asked not to discuss their views with anyone and reminded that the texts were meant as an invitation to examine certain questions rather than an all-encompassing view of men. Finally, they were told that the questions may overlap and that the text may not offer a clear-cut answer to each question. The instructions and questionnaires can be found in the appendices.

The questions were influenced by the following kinds of considerations. First, I thought that open ended questions which proceed from general to specific would reveal the points a reader emphasises but would also make it easier to compare the answers as the readers would be asked to comment on various issues, not only the aspects they came to think of first. Section A of each questionnaire contained such questions. Second, I wanted to see how the readers would interpret issues that were mentioned only in passing or had to be inferred from the text as a whole. An example of an issue that is mentioned only in passing is the character’s attitude towards work in texts A and C. The character’s values and his attitude towards life are issues that are not directly discussed but can be a part of one’s general impression of a character.

Third, I was interested in seeing how agreement would vary when related to certain details in the text. Therefore I posed questions based on quotations from the text in section B after the more general questions of section A. Questions A 9, B 10, 12a and C 9 (the letter refers to the questionnaire, the number to the question number) asked the reader to explain what an expression meant. Questions A 10, 12 and 14, B 13 and C 15 addressed an issue which I felt could be interpreted in two ways. The other questions based on a quotation asked the readers to suggest a reason for the situation described in the quotation or explain what impression the quotation gave them. Many of these
questions also asked the readers to indicate whether they believed the situation described in the quotation was common in the lives of other men or corresponded to the reader's own experience.

Questions of this latter type were motivated by my desire to find out how the readers generally view men and understand certain behaviour in reality. I first asked the readers to indicate if they thought the behaviour they had perceived in the text was common among men they know in order to see what kind of beliefs about other people the readers might have. I then asked the readers to indicate how the issue at question corresponds to their own experiences in order to see if there would be some interesting relationship between beliefs about others and oneself. I hoped these questions might also provide background information for understanding particular interpretations.

Because my focus in this thesis is examining the factors that influence interpretations rather than the readers' views on men, I will here consider answers to these questions mainly as background information and refer to them only in cases where they reveal beliefs or personal experiences that seem to have affected an interpretation. At some later point one could take these answers as the primary focus and concentrate on the view of men they suggest.

I also wanted to know whether the readers thought the text was written by a man or a woman, and what they thought the author's message was. These questions were placed at the end of each questionnaire in section C. In order to see how the readers' emotions about the story might influence their interpretations I asked the readers what emotions the story had evoked. I also asked the readers whether they had found the characters realistic.

Questionnaire D contained mainly background questions which tried to gauge the readers' views about men. It also asked a few background questions about the reader and invited the reader to give feedback on the survey. In addition, I wanted to see what impression a multiple choice question might give about the agreement between the readers. Therefore I included one multiple choice question in questionnaire D. This question asked the readers to assess how well a given adjective describes the male
characters. Some of these adjectives were chosen because I thought they described a particular character very well, such as "verbally talented", which I connected with Coutts in text A. Some, such as "masculine", were included because I thought this was a quality one could assess in any of the characters.

When preparing the survey I also read Finnish research on men in order to see which questions might be of particular interest. Since such research is still rather scarce and the questions addressed by the studies very different, I did not find any clear focuses apart from violence towards women, which seems to be one of the prime concerns of both feminist and men studies. However, one of the reasons why I asked about the characters' attitude towards work, life and sexuality was that they were often brought up in, for example, *Miehen elämää* (The Life of Men) edited by J. P. Roos and Eeva Peltonen.

The first version of the questionnaires was tested by one reader. The main feedback was that there were too many questions, and as a result I removed some questions and joined a few others together. I also altered the order of some questions and clarified some instructions. I had originally called the set of questionnaires a "test" but changed it to "survey" because my pilot reader suggested that the idea of failure, which one might associate with the word "test", could be intimidating and was not appropriate in this context.

**1.4. Method of analysis, definitions and the problem of similarity versus uniqueness**

In this section I will explain the method used in analysing the answers and examine with the help of some examples whether it is sensible to talk about similar interpretations despite the fact that most of the answers also contain unique elements. I will also use these examples to discuss Fish's concept of interpretive communities. Finally, I will introduce definitions for some key terms.
My analysis proceeded in the following way. At the very first stage, I read through all the answers of each reader. I then typed the answers grouping them in such a way that the answers to the same question were listed one after the other. To get an overview of the recurring themes, I read through all the answers as they were now grouped by question. I then began analysing the answers question by question, marking down which readers mentioned a particular idea and making another list of the unique suggestions. Once this analysis was complete, I made a summary of the recurring ideas. This analysis gave me an understanding of which interpretations were common in the group. I then turned back to the answers of each individual looking for recurring themes, emotional reactions, associations to personal life or voiced concerns that may explain the conclusions of that individual. Finally, I marked on one copy of each text all the passages that the readers had referred to and noted which reader mentioned the passage and what ideas the reader associated with it.

The main challenge in the analysis was to determine which readers express the same idea. In most cases, the answers I have grouped together use synonymous expressions and hence it is easy to give clear grounds for the grouping. A good example is the idea that Coutts fears Winifred in answers to text A. There are also situations where the readers seem to be talking about the same matter, but approach it from different angles and hence there is more variety in the answers. One such example is the opposition of Winifred and Constance in text A. Some readers concentrate on the duality in Coutts’ feelings for them, some on the differences between the female characters. In these cases the answers could have been grouped in some other way also. I have grouped the answers in the chosen way because it seems to me that the readers are talking about the same thing and would most likely agree with each other, if they were to discuss the issue. However, because I have not done this test to justify the grouping, someone with a different understanding of the most sensible way to group the answers could suggest a different alternative.

The second challenge is to consider the implications of the whole answer in addition to distinguishing different elements in it. In a few cases the statements in an
answer contradict each other, and I have treated such answers separately from those which more clearly express a given view. Usually, however, the different elements in an answer support each other.

The overall outcome of these analyses was that most answers contain both common and unique elements. The common elements are ideas that are mentioned by several readers. The unique elements are differences in wordings, observations that are not mentioned by other readers and individual explanations related to the common ideas. In addition, there are a few instances where only one reader presents an idea that opposes the idea presented by several other readers. The members of this last category I have dubbed "exceptional interpretations" and they will be presented in a separate section. But at this point, let us look at some examples of the other elements. The common ideas are highlighted in bold, some common explanations related to these ideas in underlining and the individual observations or explanations in italics. All of these examples are related to text A.

20FO Coutts seems to like being admired by women but is unwilling to commit himself to one woman. With Winifred he plays with fire, but is also afraid of her (480-489). He says he loves Constance but seems bored by her—he has apparently just come back from a long trip but does not want to go to her first thing he wants to see Laura and Winifred first. I think his relationships with Winifred and Constance reflect his indecisiveness. Both women complement different sides of his personality, and he doesn't know which to choose—although I get the impression he chose Constance also partly because Winifred obviously doesn't want to get married, so he didn't have a chance with her.

22FO The desire Winifred arouses in Coutts is something new and frightening for him. Despite his efforts he cannot control it. Coutts' view of sexuality is also partly based on the idea of the eternal battle between the sexes. (576-577, 626, 655-658, 704).

29FO The sexuality is referred to with words "intense and unnatural" (A 102, 487-489). Coutts fears even female beauty, the same time he enjoys it. When he gets aroused (A 107, 668-673), he cannot control himself. This is something he both hates and wants to experience. When Winifred is passionate, too (A 107, 686 It... given) Coutts thinks he knows the engagement has been a mistake (A 108, 706-708 this... false.)

8MO Coutts has divided himself in two, part husband, part adventurer. (p.101-102, 464-487). He does not feel at ease with women: they either bore him, or frighten him, or both. He feels inadequate in the role of husband and tries to compensate by pretending to live up to the ideal. This leaves him still feeling inadequate, but now guilty and divided too.

6MLa Constance presents to him the family traditions and the pressure of the society, which he would like to escape from but knows he cannot. Winifred, on the other hand, is a modern and exciting woman, and he is simultaneously attracted and afraid of her.
A common idea in these answers is the idea that Coutts is afraid of Winifred. A common explanation related to his fear is the idea found in the responses of readers 22 and 29 that Coutts desires Winifred and cannot control himself when he is aroused by her. The individual explanations related to common ideas are the following. Reader 22's idea that Coutts sees sexuality as a battlefield in the war between the sexes and reader 29's idea that Coutts wants to be carried away by passion but also hates it are individual explanations related to the common idea that Coutts fears Winifred. Reader 20's idea that both women complement different sides of Coutts' personality and reader 6's idea that social pressures bind Coutts to Constance are individual explanations related to the common conclusion that Coutts wavers between the two women. Reader 8's idea that Coutts feels inadequate in the role of husband seems to be a general explanation of his behaviour. An example of an individual observation, a detail that no other reader mentions, is reader 20's remark that rather than going straight home, Coutts "wants to see Laura and Winifred first".

One may ask whether it is sensible to say that there are similarities in the answers if they also contain unique elements. Should we not consider each answer, or the answers of one person, as one indivisible unit and search for the logic behind it in itself, as Bleich and Holland suggest? The problem with this approach is that if the answers of one person are considered an indivisible unit, we will very easily lose sight of the fact that the same idea occurs in the answers of several readers. At least this seems to have happened in Holland's own analyses (see page 16). I think it is sensible to say that all of the six answers presented above express the idea that Coutts fears Winifred, and such similarity cannot be overlooked when trying to understand literary interpretation. The unique wordings, observations or explanations in the answers do not overrule this similarity. Rather, we need to find a theory that can account both for the fact that the readers agree on this point and that they may suggest different explanations for it.

If one looks closely at the points where the readers agree and disagree, it seems there are different layers in interpretation, which we might call defining a situation,
explaining a situation and expressing an attitude towards a situation. The definition of a situation can also function as an explanation from some other point of view, but I think these categorisations can be helpful when analysing the connections between ideas that appear together in the answers. The agreement is generally strongest on the level of *identifying a situation*, for example, the idea that Coutts fears Winifred. The *explanations* may be either widely shared, mentioned by only one reader or missing completely. The answers of readers 22 and 29 contain both common explanations, e.g. the idea that Coutts' fear is related to sexual desire and losing control, and individual explanations, e.g. that sexuality is a battle between the sexes. The answers of readers 6 and 8 do not explain his fear at all. In all of these examples the readers' *attitudes* seem rather neutral, but in some cases the attitude can be the main difference between various answers.

A further examination of the *explanations* also shows that both the common and individual explanations reflect common understandings of human motivations. For example, the idea that different people complement different sides of one's personality or the idea that men's fear of women is related to sexual desire are both rather common beliefs. Hence it seems that an integral part of literary interpretation is connecting the behaviour described in a text with some common way to explain such behaviour, and here the readers may either follow the same path or divide into different groups.

These examples of the readers' answers also show quite clearly why Fish's concept of interpretive communities as those who agree is problematic. As the interpretations overlap to differing degrees, how do we decide which readers belong to the same community? In the examples presented above, all of the five readers think Coutts fears Winifred. Readers 22 and 29 also agree on two further points: Coutts' fear is related to the desire he feels for her, and the fact that he cannot control himself when he is aroused. The other three may or may not accept these two points. In addition, all of the readers make some observation or suggest an explanation not expressed by anyone else. If we decide that the members of a community have to agree on all points, then many readers will be the only member in their community, at least until further negotiation. If we decide that each individual view denotes a distinct interpretive
community, each reader will end up with a unique combination of memberships in a large number of interpretive communities. One may then ask: how does the concept of an interpretive community help us to understand the readers' responses? Is it not much simpler to just conclude that the extent of the readers' agreement varies?\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, before looking at the results, let us summarise the key terms that will be used in the analysis. Interpretation, view, and response are used interchangeably to refer to the readers' understanding of a text. They may refer to the combination of common or individual ideas or to one idea only, but this should be clear from the context in which they are used. An idea is an observation or conclusion made by a reader. A common idea appears in the answers of several readers, often also in many answers of the same reader. An individual observation is a reference to some detail of the text mentioned by only one reader. Usually the individual observations are such that one may expect many other readers to have noticed them also although they are mentioned by only one reader. An individual explanation is an explanation of some aspect of the text given by only one reader, but which does not oppose any common ideas. Most of the individual explanations are related to common ideas. An exceptional interpretation is an idea that opposes some common idea and is presented by only one reader.

When discussing the relationship between the text and the interpretations I have wanted to distinguish between the following four situations: 1) an issue is described in large parts of the text (e.g. the protagonists' relationships to women), 2) it is easy to point out passages that have most likely influenced an interpretation (e.g. the word "shy" in descriptions of the girl in text C), 3) the references are scarce, i.e. there are only a few brief and possibly indirect references to an issue (e.g. references to work in text A), and 4) there are no direct references to an issue but it has to be inferred from the text as whole (e.g. the protagonists' attitude towards life). In this context, the term issue refers to a point of which I believe a reader can form an opinion based on the expressions used in

\textsuperscript{14} Bleich suggests that a community can also be based on common interests rather than agreement on some specific point (SC 125). However, then the problem would be to decide which people have the same concern.
the text and his or her understanding of people. I believe that the readers' conclusions are usually based on the work as a whole, but if a conclusion seems closely connected with a particular passage, I assume that this passage has a special status in the reader's overall understanding of the work. It also makes a difference whether one can connect a conclusion with some passage in the text or not. Therefore, I have used the expression "inferred from the text as a whole" to refer to situations where it is not clear which passages have contributed to a conclusion.

With the term *personal concern* I mean a personal interest or worry that could give a reader a subjective motivation for a particular interpretation. Subjective motives have a central role in Bleich's theory, and he also talks about concerns, but he does not actually define either term. Therefore my motivation to see if the answers could be explained with personal concerns is inspired by Bleich, but he may not agree with my definition of the term.
2. Results and discussion

The first prominent aspect of the material is that some ideas appear time and time again in the responses of several readers. These ideas are typically not tied to one question but appear in answers to various questions and might be mentioned more than once by the same reader. Often these ideas also seem related to each other as if one conclusion led to another. In addition to ideas mentioned by a great number of readers, it is common to find an idea pointed out by, for example, three to six readers. Many of the common ideas also seem closely related to passages that have been pointed out by the readers.

In addition to common ideas, the answers contain unique elements. Many answers contain an observation not found in the other answers, or offer a unique explanation for an idea mentioned by many readers. Agreement and variation also seem to vary between questions. Some questions evoke very similar answers while others yield a few different interpretations, divide the readership, or lead to a great variety of observations with no widely shared view.

Hence, the data contain the following kinds of agreement and variety to account for. In the agreement section there are three main phenomena: 1) ideas that appear in many answers related to one text, 2) agreement related to particular questions and 3) similarity in references to the text. In the variety section it is possible to distinguish four types of variety: 1) individual observations or explanations of an idea, 2) situations where only one reader offers a view that opposes the other interpretations, 3) situations where readers are divided into two groups with opposing opinions and 4) questions that do not evoke any widely shared interpretations. Of these seven cases, ideas that appear throughout the material and individual remarks or explanations are common. Situations where one reader forms a completely deviant view are rare. Typically, an answer contains both common ideas and a unique observation. I will begin my presentation by introducing the common ideas and suggest how they are related to the text. I will then examine agreement and variety on the level of questions, look at the opposing opinions,
introduce the exceptional views and finally see how associations to personal life or personal concerns may have influenced some interpretations. Since the material to be covered is rather large and my focus is on trying to explain actual interpretations, I will discuss only interpretations that appear in the answers to this survey.

2.1. Common interpretations

Contrary to the history of reader-response research that has emphasised the idiosyncrasy of interpretation, the first thing that struck me in the data was that many readers seemed to have formed a very similar understanding of various aspects of the texts. In this section I will present the most commonly voiced ideas. The wordings in which the ideas are presented are mainly direct quotations from the answers, and I have marked them in bold typeface. In cases where two closely related expressions have been used by the readers, I will present them both; for example, Coutts is **playing it safe or avoiding risks**. Usually the readers whom I have placed in the same group have used the highlighted or a synonymous expression in their answers. In cases where I have grouped together clearly different expressions, I will present examples to illustrate the logic behind the grouping. The number of different readers who have mentioned a particular idea is indicated in parentheses. This number is based on clear references only, borderline cases are not included.

Text A is D. H. Lawrence's "The Witch à la Mode". Most prominent in the answers related to this text is the idea that Coutts' relationship to Winifred and his behaviour are governed by **fear**. This idea is mentioned by nineteen of the twenty-seven participants. In order to give an understanding of how this idea appears in the answers and how it is tied to other ideas, I will present one answer from each reader who mentioned the idea. I have chosen these particular answers because the idea of fear and its connection to other ideas is expressed most clearly in them. The answers are presented after the question which evoked them, and the expressions on which this grouping is based are in bold typeface. Other ideas that are common in the answers
related to this text and that I will also refer to in this section are highlighted in italics. In the reader labels F stands for female, M for male, La indicates that the person has studied some language, Li indicates that the person has studied literature and O indicates that the person has some other education. The numbers in the answers refer to the line numbers in the text.

1 a) What is Coutts like? What emotions does he evoke in you?

27FLa The final impression of Coutts is a bit repulsive and he is boringly *traditional*. On the other hand, he seems quite *sharp*, and occasionally his thinking is unusual (for a man) (e.g. lines 425-449). His cultural hobbies are also a plus. But he *lives in emptiness* (355-366) and he *does not want to/dares not change it* (334-343). *His masculinity is based on an old-fashioned* (I understand that the text describes old times, thus this is viewed from the present), *imbalance power relation to women* (468-480), and so passion is *frightening* and too much, even though it attracts him.

21FO I think Coutts is a man who is *torn between two desires*, and this conflict is revealed in his feelings for these two women. With Constance he wants to settle down and have a family because he can control his feelings for her, i.e. he does not feel as strongly for her as for Winifred. These latter feelings he cannot *control* nor can he control Winifred, and this situation is more *frightening* for him. Winifred is a threat to his *freedom*.

6) How would you describe Coutts' attitude towards women and his relationships to Winifred and Constance? Why are they such as you've described?

4MLa He has a *binary attitude towards women*, he either idealizes them (468-475) or is uncomfortable with their sexuality (Winifred). His hatred and attraction towards her is caused by the feelings Winifred's sexuality stirs up in him (desire and *fear* of that desire). I believe Coutts is a *product of his era* (early 20th century?). In those days, sexuality, especially woman's sexuality was much more a taboo than it is now.

6MLa Constance presents to him the family traditions and the *pressure of the society*, which he would like to escape from but knows he cannot. Winifred, on the other hand, is a modern and exciting woman, and he is simultaneously attracted and *afraid* of her.

8MO Coutts has divided himself in two, part husband, part adventurer. (p.101-102, 464-487). He does not feel at ease with women: they *either bore him*, or *frighten* him, or both. He feels inadequate in the role of husband and tries to compensate by pretending to live up to the ideal. This leaves him still feeling inadequate, but now guilty and divided too.

20FO Coutts seems to like being admired by women but is unwilling to commit himself to one woman. With Winifred he plays with fire, but is also *afraid* of her (480-489). He says he loves Constance but seems bored by her—he has apparently just come back from a long trip but does not want to go to her first thing he wants to see Laura and Winifred first. I think his relationships with W and C reflect his *indecisiveness*. Both women complement different sides of his personality, and he doesn't know which to choose—although I get the impression he chose Constance also partly because Winifred obviously doesn't want to get married, so he didn't have a chance with her.

26FLi/La I think Coutts is *either* feeling *threatened* by some women (e.g. Winifred and Laura) or he feels *superior* or protective in some way (towards Constance and Miss Syfurt). His
relationship to W is passionate, love/hate, he doesn't maybe understand her. His relationship to C is secure, sensible, protective. It's maybe because he isn't sure of himself and doesn't know what he wants, so he rather follows reason or his "reasonable instincts" (571) than his feelings, because he doesn't understand his feelings.

7) What is Coutts' relationship to his own sexuality and Winifred's sexuality? Why is it such as you've described?

2MO He likes to be admired (595) but he should conquer. He fears the power someone could exert over him through sexuality, esp. Winifred.

3MO Winifred's sexuality is for Coutts somehow frightening and fearful, somehow of course utterly incomprehensible.

9MO He is afraid of Winifred's sexuality because it is so wild and seductive. Winifred is frighteningly passionate. Coutts thinks his own sexuality is normal but is afraid of Winifred because she makes his sexuality and whole being "unnatural". This is shown in the events on pages 106-108 and in Coutts' thoughts on lines 480-485.

22FO The desire Winifred arouses in Coutts is something new and frightening for him. Despite his efforts he cannot control it. Coutts' view of sexuality is also partly based on the idea of the eternal battle between the sexes. (576-577, 626, 655-658, 704).

23FO Coutts probably accepts his own sexuality and is tempted and aroused by Winifred's strong sexuality, but he perhaps cannot, and dares not, accept it. It is perhaps somehow inappropriate, or at least too strong to be controlled and therefore frightening. It could break the steady and safe view of life Coutts tries to hold onto.

25FLa (202-219) I think it's simultaneously inhibited and very curious, emphatically present. He seeks for pleasure but is afraid of his own instincts. It is always in his mind but he's not a man of action. I'd suppose that it's a combination of innate character and upbringing/environment (norms of society).

28FLi He is afraid of both. He settles for the traditional, he is scared not to behave like is expected of him.

29FO he sexuality is referred to with words "intense and unnatural" (A 102, 487-489). Coutts fears even female beauty, the same time he enjoys it. When he gets aroused (A 107, 668-673), he cannot control himself. This is something he both hates and wants to experience. When Winifred is passionate, too (A 107, 686 It... given) Coutts thinks he knows the engagement has been a mistake (A 108, 706-708 this... false.)

30FLa Coutts is a sexual person, but he is still surprised by his own reaction to Winifred's strong sexuality. Brought up in a society of strict rules he probably never has confronted his own sexuality in this way. He is frightened by both Winifred and himself.

32FO Coutts is not in terms with his sexuality, he doesn't know how to handle it. He's afraid of Winifred's sexuality and his lust for her. This is because he wants to be in control with his feelings and situations.

12) "You know, Winifred, we should only drive each other into insanity, you and I: become abnormal."
"Yes,' she said at length: 'if we were linked together we should only destroy each other."

Why are Coutts and Winifred so sure that they are an impossible match? Do you agree with them?

24FO I think he says it because of his fear of her and the intensity of their relationship, and because of his unwillingness to look [...]unclear writing] and this and to really get to know her
rather than this image of an "intense and unnatural" but sexy and talented woman he has of her. I think she only says it because she is so disappointed by him; she now knows she'll never have him. He's probably too much of a coward for her anyway, obviously.

One of the other ideas brought up by several readers is Coutts' desire to be in control. Seventeen readers use expressions such as "Coutts wants to be in control", "cannot control himself" or is "afraid of losing control". Coutts is also considered passionate (14), and the most common interpretation connects fear, control and passion in a manner similar to 22 above: "The desire Winifred arouses in him is something new and frightening for Coutts. Despite his efforts he cannot control it" (see also the answers of readers 21, 23, 29, 32).

Another central idea is the duality of Coutts' feelings towards women or the way in which the women represent opposing options to him. The expressions included in this group vary but they all share a strong sense of duality. For example, reader 8 notes above that women "either bore him, or frighten him", reader 4 talks about Coutts' "binary attitude" of either "idealization" or discomfort with women's sexuality and reader 26 notes that Coutts is either feeling "threatened" or "superior". Seven of the ten readers who talk about duality in his feelings mention fear as one part, and attraction or boredom as the other. When the women are seen as opposing options, the most common idea is that Constance is "safe", "traditional" or "nice" and Winifred "exciting", "passionate" or "independent". For example: "Constance is a wife and Winifred an intriguing, sexual femme fatale." Altogether, the idea of duality in Coutts' feelings or between the women is present in the answers of 24 different readers.

Closely related to the idea of the women as opposing options is the view that Coutts has difficulty making satisfying decisions (17). Like the previous group, this group also contains different expressions such as "is torn between two desires" (e.g. reader 21 above), "indecisive", "cannot choose", "does not know what he wants", "is lost", "is confused", "does not understand himself", or "is settling for the second best". I have grouped these references together because it seems they all aim at describing Coutts' situation in relation to the two women from slightly different angles. The first three imply that he should choose one woman but has difficulty deciding which one, and the next four
seem to suggest a reason for this difficulty; if one does not know what one wants, it is
difficult to choose. The idea of settling for less seems to be a judgement of the choice he
is about to make. The impression that these references are closely related is
strengthened by the fact that some readers combine them. For example:

26FLa/Li  Coutts thinks he knows what he wants but he does not really know. He wants to be sensible
but it seems that he is taking the easy way and settling for the second best. He has made
decisions but is having regrets. He is playing it safe and is unhappy because he is somehow
aware that he is deceiving himself. I feel sorry for him, but I think that he is weak and
unreliable, though sensitive.

This answer also contains two other views shared by many readers. It seems
many readers saw Coutts' wavering between the women in a negative light. Eight readers
referred to his weakness in their free responses, and when asked in questionnaire D to
rate how well the expression "weak (psychologically)" describes Coutts, seventeen
readers found it describes him rather or very well.\textsuperscript{15} In total, eighteen different readers
found him weak or quite weak. It was also thought by many that Coutts is playing it safe
or avoiding risks (11). It seems many readers saw Constance as the "traditional" and
therefore "safe" type of wife candidate and Winifred as far more "exciting" but less
secure. Thus Coutts' decision to choose Constance is connected with settling for less and
avoiding risks. Most likely the fact that Coutts intends to marry the woman who seems to
 correspond better to the social norms in the story's society has led many readers to
conclude that Coutts is influenced by social pressures and wants to conform to
social norms (12). For example, reader 28 notes above that "He settles for the
traditional, he is scared not to behave like is expected of him." Alternatively, some
readers assume like reader 6 above that Coutts cannot "escape" "the pressure of
society" but has to choose Constance.

On the whole, Coutts is considered rather passive. Several readers point out
that he does not try to actively influence his life (9) but is "fatalistic" or "just lets things

\textsuperscript{15} The full results of this question are included in Appendix G. Answers to question 5 in section B of
questionnaire D.
happen”. This passivity seems to be connected with the idea that he does not expect much from life or lacks purpose (11). Seven readers also use expressions such as Coutts is looking for "something firm" or "purpose from marriage". Thus the answers of eighteen different readers seem to contain the assumption that Coutts feels his life lacks purpose.

The readers had similar views also about the female characters. Winifred was considered intelligent (8), strong (11), independent (8), sensual (6) and emotional (5). Five readers also felt pity or sympathy towards her. Laura appeared talkative (8), gay (5), warm (5) and inquisitive (10). Constance was seen as submissive (7), a traditional family girl (7), and innocent (9). Eight readers felt pity for her and seven pointed out that she is seen only through Coutts.

In addition to the aforementioned ideas, a few others were mentioned by several readers. It was thought that Coutts is reserved (10) or insecure (11), and seems to desire or value freedom (14) but also stability (12). In the free responses eight readers suggested Coutts is "egoistic" and in questionnaire D a total of twenty-three readers thought "selfish" describes him rather or very well. Likewise, six referred to his intelligence in the free responses, and a total of twenty considered him rather or very intelligent in questionnaire D. Five pointed out his eloquence in the free responses and eighteen readers found him rather or very talented verbally. Finally, twenty-four readers found him rather or very contradictory in questionnaire D.

When one looks at these ideas, it seems many of them are closely connected with each other or derived from each other. At the centre are the two women, one of which is "traditional" and "safe", the other "modern and exciting". As Coutts is passionate and desires freedom on the one hand, but wants stability on the other, he is attracted to both women and has difficulty choosing which one to spend his life with. This situation then gives rise to several conclusions. It is suggested that he chooses safety with Constance because he is afraid he cannot control his passion for Winifred. This makes him seem weak, or prone to social pressures, and it is also suggested that he "settles" for boredom with the traditional Constance because he does not expect much
from life and tries to find purpose from marriage. It also seems to many that Coutts does not actively try to influence his life but just lets things happen. Probably his wavering between the women is also the reason why so many readers find him weak, egoistic and contradictory.

In the answers related to text B, i.e. Peter Taylor's "Rain in the Heart", it is not possible to trace a similar chain of conclusions springing from one central issue in the story as in text A. The agreement related to this text seems to centre on details: some characteristics of the sergeant and the implications of certain quotations from the text. Thus I will not present a long selection of quotations to illustrate the agreement but will use only a few examples.

In general, the readers found the sergeant "a good man". He was considered kind-hearted, kind or good (13), decent, mannered or polite (6), and quiet (6), calm (6) or pensive (6). For example:

9MO He is serious and pensive, or perhaps one should rather say analytic. He is constantly analysing his feelings and thoughts in order to find their causes. In lines 76-78 he says words have a surprisingly big effect on him; a sign of sensitivity, slight emotionality. The sergeant is also calm and polite, which is shown in his encounter with the woman on the bus stop. I thought he was sympathetic and I felt I identified with him strongly. Though it may sound funny, his thoughts and behaviour made me content and glad.

His relationships to other people seem reserved or cautious (17). He values security (12), family (14), love or his wife (15), beauty (9) and peace (11), and respects women (8). His life is troubled by the contrast between home and work (16). He idealizes his wife (12), and it is assumed that his attitude towards life and women has been changed by marriage (12). Nine readers also pointed out that he seems to have a very traditional view of gender roles.

In questionnaire D, the readers also showed considerable agreement in rating how well some of the expressions in the question describe the sergeant. The readers found that the following expressions describe the sergeant rather or very well: compassionate (21), empathetic (24), responsible (27), and sensitive (23). They also
found that the sergeant is only somewhat or not at all arrogant (27), distrustful (27) or stupid (25).

The cleaning woman was considered simple or not very intelligent (13), racist (8), self-righteous (7) and bitter (17). Eleven readers noted that they would dislike having to be with someone like her but most of them also felt pity for her. In total, twelve readers pitied her. The wife was considered gentle (9), loving (7) and understanding or perceptive (12). Eight readers pointed out that she seems to be the perfect wife.

Four questions related to a quotation from the text also sparked exceptionally similar interpretations. In question 12 a) the readers were asked why the sergeant would come to think of the "hairy bodies" of the other soldiers. Nineteen readers thought they represented a contrast or a contrast to his wife. Many readers also found that the hairy bodies symbolised negative things (12), such as roughness. In question 11 the readers were asked why the sergeant suddenly hoped his first child would be a boy. The readers thought it was because he remembered his happy childhood (19), and wants to share that happiness with his son or relive his childhood (13). Twelve readers also suggested why he does not think about a girl. Nine thought this is because the cleaning woman presents a frightening example of a woman's destiny, and an additional three thought he probably does not know much about girls being a man himself. Question 15 asked the readers to explain why the sergeant did not tell his wife what was on his mind. The main reason suggested was that he wants to hold some things to himself (15), and eleven of these readers supposed it might be because he needs to clarify things to himself first. Finally, question 9 asked why the sergeant lingered by the bulletin board. Almost unanimously the readers concluded it was because he does not want to face the jokes of the other soldiers (23). Another interpretation was also considered by four of these readers, they suggested he might linger because he is nervous about seeing his wife (5 readers in total expressed this idea). For example:
When I read this for the first time I thought he was merely a bit weary of going into the barrack because of the jokes etc. that awaited him. But now I get a sense of him “lingering” all along, already on the fields when he stops to study the tracks... he is not in that much of a hurry to go and see his wife as one could expect. He finds it hard to leave this world, the world he’s used to by now, and enter that other one, the one where he must be the perfect husband and where everything is perfect. He also knows that once he’s entered that soft world tonight he then has to leave it straight away again in the morning, to change back again. It's hard.

Thus, although the common ideas related to text B are not as clearly connected with each other as in text A, they do have two clear foci. On the one hand, the readers point out the sergeant's "good" qualities, i.e. "kind", "responsible", "empathetic", and on the other hand, they concentrate on his wife's role in his life by suggesting that he values his wife and is troubled by the contrast between work and home.

The ideas associated with Milan Kundera's "The Hitchhiking Game" are again more closely related to each other. In the centre are the **chauvinistic aspects of the young man's behaviour**. The terms used differ, and the attitude also varies from matter-of-fact statement to outright condemnation, but I believe all the ideas I have included in this group are commonly associated with male chauvinism. However, even though one can connect the ideas expressed in an answer with male chauvinism, it is not always clear that the respondent has done so and has intended to communicate that he or she finds the man chauvinistic. Therefore, I will again present one example from each reader. The examples are divided into two groups on the basis of how clear the reference to male chauvinism is. The answers are presented after the questions that evoked them. The expressions which this grouping rests on are highlighted in bold typeface, and other ideas that appear often in the answers are marked in italics.

**Clear references**

1 a) What do you think the young man is like? What emotions does he evoke in you?

2MO Mainly he is **naive**. Other traits include emotionality and a **need to be superior**. 624-626, 576-577. His **childishness** annoys me. I sympathise with his protective feelings, but he lacks some sort of capacity to accommodate, to forgive.

8MO He's the kind of man generally referred to as "a pig" among the people I know. He's very **self-centered** and sees women essentially as things to be consumed. The only reason why he is settling for only one at the moment, and even trying to be kind to her, is that he is hoping to get something special out of her, namely purity, and perhaps some amusement too, along the way. If he loves her, it is the love of a father, or a son, or a gigolo, **never the love of an equal**. In short, he makes me feel ill.
He is sweet, tender (25) and kind (129-130), this impression is strengthened also by the line: "confidently entrusted every moment of her life to him" 337-338 and the last paragraph of the novel. However, he also has sadistic tendencies and is very revengeful when he gets angry (chapters 10 and 11). There is chauvinism and hidden cruelty in him (225-231). He evoked contradictory feelings: at first he seemed nice and understanding but then his behaviour began to anger me, feel repulsive and even slightly frightening. The man tends to be jealous, and this added to a protective nature caused a violent burst of anger. In my view, his protectiveness is shown in the beginning of the story, especially on lines 48-54 when he describes his relationship to the girl. The touch of arrogance in his thoughts on lines 30-31 "... it seemed to him that he was old and knew everything that a man could know about women" annoyed me.

The young man is like men usually are. He has strict categories for different women and it is forbidden to cross the boundaries. He sees a woman first as a woman and only after that as a person and individual. He has a very restricted and rigid way of thinking, at least in relation to women.

I think he is naïve and possessive. He is possessive and uses power in a nasty way to strengthen his ego. His masculinity comes to existence in a relationship to a suppressed woman. On the other hand, this kind of character is probably not at all unusual among real people. Occasionally he is quite nice. However, the final impression is rather unpleasant. He is also pathetic because of his restricted view of women.

He feels older and wiser than he actually is—which is quite dangerous. He shows opportunistic tendencies—likes to have his girlfriend happy, is not so interested in sharing trouble with her. His inability in role-playing and insensitivity towards his girlfriend's feelings seem odd to me. I don't like him at all. His view of womanhood seems extremely chauvinist to me.

The young man is a pathetic jerk. He thinks he is cool and that he has complete power over the young woman. In reality he gets completely insecure when the young woman shows some of her power, and can then handle the situation only with brutal violence (of mental sort). I think he is a pure example of a man who is only happy with women whom he can suppress. I hate these kind of men!

The man is a stupid misogynist. He evokes anger and bored contempt. He is sadistic.

He's young, selfish and simple. He's incapable of expressing his feelings nor can he establish mature relationships with a woman. His perception of woman is narrow, black-and-white. I find such characters extremely unpleasant.

5) How would you describe the young man's attitude towards women and his relationship with the young woman? Why are they such as you've described?

Tradition: there are two kinds of women: whores and saints: the transformation of a saint to a whore is unbearable for him; he only kisses women he loves, i.e. saints 591.

The man believes in traditionally separate social rules or modes of behaviour for men and women. The young woman realises his notion of a "good" woman, which the young man finds attractive (87-94, 224-231).

He has a double standard: he has experience with a lot of women but wants his girlfriend to be inexperienced. The classic madonna-whore thing. He is very immature in this sense in spite of his worldliness.

Attitude to women: patronizing, chauvinistic, categorizing. With the young woman: He puts her in the category of innocent little girl and treats her "solicitously" like a foster parent.
Why? He seems to have some subconscious, unknown, deep hatred of women, which is based on fear, and this attitude probably protects him from that.

25FLa The young man does not really know what to think about women. He can only think of them as either whores or saints ("good" women) but this is a piece of fiction in his mind which is beginning to blow up when he realises that his girlfriend is a human being. But I don't know if he can take it! (545-569)

26FLa/Li He hates women who act in some way sexually, e.g. flirt, because he thinks that they are deceitful and also a threat to him, because the women seem to be confident. The girl is not a threat to him, so his attitude is protective and somehow diminishing. It seems that in his opinion her chastity is her best quality (32-33) and when in the game this purity disappears, he seems to lose his love. He idealizes her (486-7) and doesn't actually know her.

28FLi He wants women (or a woman) that he can pretty much tell what to do. He is comfortable as long as he is in control. He hates openly sexual women, he is afraid of female sexuality that he can't control.

6) What is the young man's relationship to his own sexuality and the young woman's sexuality like? Why is it such as you've described?

31FO He dictates the time, place and manner. She has to obey. He knows that she wants him so it is easy for him to command her. An unbalanced relationship.

35FO He wants to be in control and tell her what to do, she is just an object. This is probably due to his immaturity and childishness.

12) "The alien quality of her soul drew attention to her body, yes, as a matter of fact it turned her body into a body for him as if until now it had existed for the young man hidden within clouds of compassion, tenderness, concern, love, and emotion, as if it had been lost in these clouds (yes, as if this body had been lost!)

What do you think of this view that tender emotions will make the "body" more distant? [...]}

23FO This kind of thinking is based on a stereotype according to which a woman is either a virgin, a whore or a mother. In the young man's mind women are divided like this. Luckily this is not a universal truth. I myself do not think this way, but I can understand that a stranger's body is sometimes more exciting than the body of someone you know well. However, I find such thinking problematic.

13) "It had always seemed to him that her inward nature was real only within the bounds of fidelity and purity, and that beyond these bounds it simply didn't exist. [...] When he saw her crossing this horrifying boundary with nonchalant elegance, he was filled with anger."

What give rise to such thinking? Why is the boundary "horrifying"? Do you think such feelings and thoughts are common among men you know? Have you ever felt in a similar way yourself?

10MO This woman was supposed to be completely different and consequently allow him to despise women (and accept his own appalling behaviour in the past) and at the same time love this exceptional woman. Now it turns out that she is a woman too. He has to either hate her or change his long-held view of this sex.

11MLa He had an image of a madonna in his head and now he sees a whore in front of him. And is terrified. I have not felt this way, but I know a lot of men who fight with this dilemma.
Indirect references

5) How would you describe the young man's attitude towards women and his relationship with the young woman? Why are they such as you’ve described?

1MO He is experienced enough with women that do not attach sex solely to a love-relationship in order to long for purity in women. Due to his work-oriented lifestyle, he has not had the time to think thoroughly about what a love relationship is all about. This is perhaps one of the reasons for why he worships rather than loves his girlfriend (486-7). He also seems to put the relationship with his girlfriend in its own pre-assigned place in his life. His girlfriend is a little bit of a plaything for him. He also thinks that his girlfriend is not very important in a spiritual sense for him (see 189). Nevertheless, he has strong and sincere feelings for her.

6MLa He wants to dominate in the sexual relationship, he wants to be the more experienced etc. That may be because in Slovakia (right?) and Eastern Europe in general boys are raised that way.

22FO Most women are rather unimportant to him, somewhat like beautiful objects one can admire from afar or from a bit closer. He has formed his own view about his girlfriend and it strengthens his feelings for her.

6) What is the young man's relationship to his own sexuality and the young woman's sexuality like? Why is it such as you've described?

4MLa He respects his own sexuality more than he respects the young woman's sexuality, whatever form of expression her sexuality takes; her coyness frustrates him, and her openly sensual and sexual behaviour angers him, because it shatters his image of her as an embodiment of purity (whatever that is). The reason? Imaturity perhaps. Incapability of seeing a relationship as a meeting point of two whole persons, instead of an opportunity to worship some self-created image. I think the same applies to the young woman as well (111-115).

5MLa He has desires that he cannot fulfil and is feeling frustrated now and then. He is afraid of the possibility of the woman being sexually free and in the end he is punishing her and living a fantasy.

32FO He regards his girlfriend's sexuality as something dirty. He intentionally has been dismissing his (and hers) sexuality.

Hence twenty-one of the twenty-seven readers clearly point to chauvinistic tendencies in the young man. The remaining six also refer to features that are often connected with male chauvinism, but when all of their answers are considered it is uncertain whether they would declare him chauvinistic if asked. Nevertheless, the answers suggest that all readers paid attention to the fact that the young man does not treat the girl as an equal.

Some of these answers also reveal that the young man's behaviour is connected with the idea of wanting to be in control (e.g. 28 above "He is comfortable as long as he is in control", also 35). In total, nineteen readers express this idea. His behaviour is also understood as a manifestation of fear (13); for example, reader 24 suggests above that "He seems to have some subconscious, unknown, deep hatred of
women, which is based on fear." It is also thought by many that his attitudes and
behaviour are influenced by social norms or other people's expectations (16). For
example, reader 6 suggests above that "boys are raised that way" and reader 7
concludes that "The man believes in traditionally separate social rules or modes of
behaviour for men and women." Many readers thought he feels pressured in general. For
example: "He feels trapped. Trapped by work and all the other expectations put on him."
In total, twenty-two readers suggest that he feels trapped or unable to control his life,
and thirteen readers name work as a source of outside restriction and control.

The readers also had very similar views of the young woman. She was
considered childish or naive (10), shy (16) and insecure (17). It was thought that the
man has chosen her as his girlfriend because she fits the standard of a proper
girlfriend well (10). The readers also thought that when her behaviour changes, the
young man is shocked because he feels cheated (10) and feels he has to redefine his
relationship to the girl or women in general (13). For example, reader 10 suggests
above: "He has to either hate her or change his long-held view of this sex."

Other ideas that I have highlighted in this selection of answers are the young
man's selfishness (e.g. readers 8, 34), childishness (e.g. reader 2), and immaturity
(e.g. readers 20, 4). These views were mentioned a few times in the free responses and
they were supported by a clear majority of readers in questionnaire D. Twenty-five
readers indicated that "selfish" describes him rather or very well, twenty-four readers
found him rather or very childish, and twenty-two readers thought "mature" does not
describe him at all.

The chain of inferences between these common ideas seems to be the
following: in the centre is the young man's chauvinism, which is connected with a desire
to be in control and fear. It is also associated with the norms of society as well as
selfishness, childishness and immaturity. The girl is found childish and naive, shy and
insecure, which makes her easy to control. Therefore she fits the man's needs as well as
the image of a "proper" faithful girlfriend. When her behaviour changes, he feels cheated
and has to redefine his relationship to her. Finally it is thought that one reason why he feels unable to control his life is that his life is restricted by his work.

Thus we are ready to summarise the most commonly expressed ideas for each text and see how they are related to expressions used in the text. The readers concluded that Coutts in text A is **indecisive** (17), **influenced by social pressures** (12), **does not try to influence his life** (9), **lacks purpose** (18), **avoids risks** (11) and seems **weak** (18). He is also considered **passionate** (14), **reserved** (10), **insecure** (11), and **selfish** (23), though **intelligent** (20). He values **freedom** (14) and **stability** (12), and his feelings towards the two women are marked by **duality** (24). He **fears** Winifred (19), would **like to be in control** (17), and seems **contradictory** (24).

The readers found the drill sergeant in text B is **kind** (13), **sensitive** (23), **compassionate** (21), **empathetic** (24) and **responsible** (27), though **reserved** (17). He values **security** (12), **family** (14), **love or his wife** (15), **beauty** (9) and **peace** (11). His life is troubled by the **contrast between home and work** (16). He **idealises** his wife (12), and it seems his **attitude towards life and women has been changed by marriage** (12). He does **not** seem **arrogant** (27), **distrustful** (27) or **stupid** (25). Many readers also thought that the hairy bodies represent a **contrast** to his wife (19), he thinks he wants a son because he **remembers his happy childhood** (19), he does not tell his ideas to his wife because he **wants to hold some things to himself** (15), and he lingers by the bulletin board because he **does not want to face the jokes of the other soldiers** (23).

In answers related to text C, the readers concentrated on the **chauvinistic** aspects of the young man's behaviour (21 overtly, 6 indirectly). The readers concluded that the young man wants to be **in control** (19) and that his behaviour is governed by **fear** (13) and **social norms** (16). He feels **unable to control his life** (22), partly due to his **restraining work** (13). The girl seems **childish** or **naive** (10), **shy** (16) and **insecure** (17). She **fits the image of a proper girlfriend** (10), and when her behaviour changes, the man feels **cheated** (10) and **has to redefine his relationship to her** (13). On the whole, the young man was found **selfish** (25), **childish** (24) and **immature** (25).
Let us next examine the relationship between these common ideas, expressions in the text and the readers' references to the text.

2.1.1. Common interpretations, the text and references to it

The relationship between the often mentioned ideas, the text and the readers' references to it is very interesting. Some of the common ideas have a word-for-word counterpart in the text, some seem closely related to particular passages, and some seem to be based on the text as a whole, or large parts of it, rather than certain expressions. Although readers point out various parts of the text, the references concentrate on those passages that seem closely connected with the common interpretations. However, the readers do not necessarily refer to such passages as a basis for the common interpretation but may associate it with something else. Thus it seems readers find the same passages important, but often draw attention to different aspects of them. One reason for this may be that the most immediate interpretation, for example, the connection between the word "fear" and the interpretation that the character is afraid may seem too self-evident to be worth pointing out explicitly. Often the passages mentioned by many readers also seem relevant for several interpretations. In this section, I will try to point out passages that seem closely related to the common interpretations and also indicate how this connection is reflected in the readers' references to them.

One of the most common interpretations of text A, the idea that Coutts is afraid of Winifred seems to have a very clear anchor in the text, for the first line on page 102 reads: "Coutts felt a vague fear of Winifred." The idea of the women as opposing options is not as clearly spelled out, yet the sense of opposition is strong throughout the last paragraph on page 101, where Coutts notes, for example, that "Vaguely he knew she [Constance] would bore him. And Winifred fascinated him." Eighteen readers refer to the paragraph which contains both of these quotes and six of them consider it the most important passage in the text. However, rather than explicitly pointing to the idea of fear
or opposition, the readers suggest it "explains the situation" or gives them a particular view of Constance.

The view that Coutts does not expect much from life seems to have one of its roots in a passage that runs from the last paragraphs of page 97 to the middle of page 98. Here Coutts says several times that "nothing seems to matter" (97) and that "I don't want anything" (98). Six readers refer to this passage as the reason why they thought he does not expect much. It seems many readers have perceived a sense of resignation also in the discussion on marriage on pages 103 and 104. Particularly the lines "Marry—settle—to be a good husband, good father, partner in the business; get fat, be an amiable gentleman—Q.E.F." (103), have led seven readers to the conclusion that "Coutts doesn't expect much consciously", values conventionality, and wants a typical life with order and stability. Most likely the aforementioned paragraph on pages 101-102 where Coutts ponders on his role with Connie and fear of Winifred has also contributed to the conclusion that he is conventional or "wants to take the easy way" of leading a conventional life.

The view that Coutts just lets things happen seems to have close ties to two passages. First, the two opening pages contain several instances which imply that Coutts is aware he is about to do something harmful, yet still goes along with it. One of the clearest examples is on page 89, where he notes looking at the moon:

'It is like a knife to be used at a sacrifice,' he said to himself. Then, secretly: 'I wonder for whom?'

He refused to answer this question, but he had the sense of Constance, his betrothed, waiting for him in the Vicarage in the north. He closed his eyes. (89)

Here, Coutts realises that Constance is likely to be hurt by what he is doing but rather than stopping, as one might expect a person in a similar situation to do, he "closes his eyes" and continues. Perhaps because this passage suggests a departure from the norm that one should not hurt others, it has caught the attention of (at least) four readers. One suggests it shows how Constance is "just an object, a sacrifice", one thinks it shows how Coutts shuns responsibility for other people's emotions and two suggest it shows he knows he is about to do something wrong.
The discussion on Free Will and Mr. Cleveland's view of why people do things: "it's because we can't help it— eh?" (91) also seems to underline the question of motivation and responsibility for one's actions, and suggests one possible explanation for the way Coutts just lets things happen. Four readers found it the most important passage in the text, and one thought it contains the message of the story. Three of these readers thought the passage explains everything that happens to Coutts—he just cannot help it. The other two thought it poses the crucial question of the story: do people do things because they want to or because they cannot help it?

The rest of the often mentioned ideas in relation to text A, i.e. Coutts' desire to be in control, his passion, his difficulty in making decisions, his desire to avoid risks, his reservedness, his desire for freedom, his intelligence, eloquence, selfishness and weakness, are more difficult to pin down to particular passages. These views seem to be inferred from the text as a whole or to follow from other conclusions. For example, it is difficult to say where exactly does Coutts' intelligence or reservedness become manifest, rather, these impressions are based on various details. The judgement that he is weak could be the result of various chains of reasoning. For example, Coutts' decision to give up Winifred and marry Constance perhaps leads to the conclusion that he avoids risks, and this conclusion then contributes to the judgement that he is weak. It is possible to point to details in the text that have most likely contributed to these interpretations, but the connection is less immediate than in the cases I have discussed above.

In text C, one can also find passages that seem closely connected with some of the often voiced views. For example, eleven readers indicate that the two opening paragraphs on page 11 suggest the man perceives his work primarily as a constraint. The girl's shyness, lack of self-confidence and childishness are also strongly suggested by wordings used in the text. The passages containing these expressions are referred to by a few readers, though usually they point out some other aspect of the passage. For example, the word "shy" appears five times in descriptions of the girl. One such instance is the sentence "[s]he always got shy in advance at the thought of how she was going to get shy" (5). Two readers refer to the paragraph which contains this sentence, but they
focus on the mind-body dualism in the girl's thinking. Her insecurity seems underlined in
the sentence: "She didn't have either particularly good nerves or self-confidence and
easily fell into a state of anxiety and fear" (7). Two readers suggest that this sentence
expresses her lack of self-confidence and fragility. The view that the girl is childish has
perhaps been influenced by the fact that the man used to call the girl's usual expression
"childish and simple" (8). Two readers refer to this passage but concentrate on different
implications.

Although the view that the man is chauvinistic and childish and wants to be
in control are probably based on various parts of the text and to some extent derived from
each other, two passages are singled out by many readers when discussing these
issues. One of them reads as follows.

> Because he was only twenty-eight, it seemed to him that he was old and knew everything
that a man could know about women. In the girl sitting beside him he valued precisely what,
until now, he had met with least in women: purity. (3-4)

Eight readers referred to this passage, three emphasising the chauvinism of his polarised
view of women and three suggesting his immaturity. Similarly, eleven readers referred to
chapter 10 on pages 20-22 when discussing the young man's view of women as
madonnas or whores, and his desire to control, revenge and humiliate. Five of them
thought it contains the most important passage in the text.

In text B, the most obvious connection is between the idea that the sergeant
is kind and the line "But finally a thought of his own good fortune and an innate kindness
urged him to speak again" (244). Three readers single it out as the reason why they think
he is kind. The encounter with the cleaning woman has probably also contributed to the
conclusion that he is reserved, compassionate, values beauty and is pensive.

The idea that his attitude towards life has been changed by marriage is
connected with the first paragraph of page 243, where the sergeant examines his attitude
towards suburban life, and makes, for example, the following observation:

> And yet now when he sometimes lay wakeful and lonesome at night in the long dark barrack
among the carefree and garrulous soldiers [...] he dreamed longingly of the warm
companionship he would find with her and their sober neighbors in a house with a fine roof.
The paragraph which contains this passage is referred to most often in the responses. Twelve readers refer to it, four suggesting that it shows his attitude has been changed by marriage. Among the other ideas associated with it are that he lives in the future, is traditional and values his family life.

The idea that his life is split in two is associated with two passages that have also attracted a lot of attention. These are the fourth paragraph on page 241 and the first paragraph on page 255. They end with the following words:

How unreal to him were these soldiers and their hairy bodies and all their talk and their rough ways. How temporary. How different from his own life, from his real life with her. (241)

He was left with the sense that no moment in his life had any relation to another. It was as though he was living a thousand lives. And the happiness and completeness of his marriage could not seem so large a thing. (255)

Ten readers refer to the first paragraph and nine to the second. Seven readers connect these passages with the idea that the sergeant's life is split between work and home. Other ideas associated with them are that he has idealised his life, that he is a family man and does not have time to enjoy the most important things in his life. Two readers see the first paragraph as the most important passage in the text and four say so of the second.

The passages presented above have most likely also contributed to the conclusion that the sergeant values family and beauty, and is reserved. But, many other details could also be cited in connection to these views, and the sentence "[a]nd the happiness and completeness of his marriage could not seem so large a thing" (255) taken at face value challenges the idea that marriage is the most important thing in the sergeant's life. Therefore they seem to be based on the whole text rather than on individual passages.

Some of the interpretations related to questions with quotations from the text are also closely connected with expressions in the text. For example, the idea that the sergeant lingers around because he wants to avoid the jokes of his peers is most likely rooted in the sentence: "Yet he was filled with the dread of the jokes which must inevitably be directed at him today" (238). Similarly, the view that he hopes for a boy child because
he remembers his own childhood seems grounded in the preceding expression "... and remembered the good times he had had walking along the railroad tracks as a child" (247). The idea that the "hairy bodies" present a contrast to his wife does not have a word-for-word counterpart in the text, but there is certainly a sense of opposition between the word "temporary" associated with the hairy bodies and the word "real" associated with his life with her (241).

However, a closer examination of the answers to questions based on a quotation also suggest how important our understanding of human behaviour is in interpretation. For example, the view that the sergeant does not tell his thoughts to his wife because he wants to clarify them to himself would not appear to be grounded in any expression in the text. It seems rather that since the readers have not found any satisfying explanation in the text, they have resorted to their own understanding of people to find a reason why someone would not tell his thoughts to his partner.

The role of our understanding of human behaviour is also well captured in reader 24's explanation why the sergeant's lingering signals that he is nervous about seeing his wife (see page 71). She points out that "he is not in that much of a hurry to go and see his wife as one could expect" (emphasis added). It seems this conclusion springs from, for example, the following reasoning. As the reader has learnt to expect that newly-weds would rush to each other after a long separation, the sergeant's lingering appears curious. This prompts her to search for a reason that would make his behaviour less strange. Because one such reason is offered by her understanding that people can be nervous about seeing their partners, she concludes that this is the case with the sergeant as well.

Though the role of our understanding of people is particularly clear in these examples, it is important also in cases where something seems "stated" in the text. For example, the readers would probably not have accepted the idea that Coutts fears Winifred unless his behaviour fitted their understanding of fear-motivated behaviour. At the same time, even if Coutts' behaviour fits this view, I suspect that fewer readers would have explained his behaviour by fear if the text had not included the line "Coutts felt a
vague fear of Winifred" (WàM 102). If this line had not suggested a framework in which Coutts' behaviour seems coherent, the readers would have had to find one themselves and I believe the range of interpretations would have been much wider. As a few readers suggested, Coutts' decision to end their relationship could also be explained by, for example, social pressures or the assumption that Winifred does not want to get married. But, since the idea of fear seems consistent with other parts of the text and our understanding of fear-governed behaviour, we (or a number of us) are willing to accept it. Otherwise we would also have to explain why this expression should not be taken literally.

Let us then summarise the results so far and see how they are related to the theories of Holland, Bleich, Fish, Iser and Wittgenstein. Thus far we have found that several readers connect the same ideas with a particular text. Often these common ideas seem closely related to each other. In many cases, it is possible to connect the common ideas with certain passages in the text. The readers' references often concentrate on these passages, although the readers may not connect them directly with the common ideas. The answers also contain common interpretations that cannot be easily connected with particular passages but seem to be inferred from the text as a whole. An important element in all the common conclusions seems to be a shared understanding of human behaviour.

Holland would probably suggest that the similarity in these interpretations comes from the sameness of culturally learnt hypotheses which the readers have used to interpret the text. At the same time he would insist that these interpretations must also in some way satisfy the needs of each reader's unique identity. We can of course adopt the belief that even when readers follow the conventions of their culture, these conventions must also fit the needs of their identity. But it seems that when the readers have formed similar interpretations, the culturally shared elements, such as a shared understanding of the meaning of words and human beings, have influenced the interpretation more than the reader's identity.
In Bleich's view, the evaluative perception of an object converts it to a symbolic object, and interpretation aims to explain the evaluative perception and calm disharmonious feelings related to it. If people then end up explaining their evaluative perceptions or calming their disharmonious feelings in the same way, it is somewhat unclear whether we should consider this coincidental or assume, for example, that the evaluative perception or disharmonious feeling has been the same. Bleich's method of inferring the disharmonious feelings is rather complicated but perhaps we can assume that the reader's emotional response to the story is at least an approximation of the reader's evaluative perception of it. If the readers' emotional responses are compared with their interpretations, it seems that readers with very different evaluative perceptions have formed similar interpretations. For example, readers with the following emotional responses to text A all concluded that Coutts wants to be in control, does not expect much from life and is afraid of Winifred.

1MO Heavy stuff, it is about real relationships between men and women, and about real problems in those relationships. I liked it.

2MO I was annoyed by Coutts' attitude and behaviour. Story was interesting but I did not particularly like it.

4MLa I found this story very boring, to tell the truth. It took some concentration to read the text fully, because of this. As a story it was more or less uninteresting. I am more interested in knowing what kind of reception it received at the time it was published.

24FO I did like it, yet it annoyed me at times, it repeated itself a bit and had a few cliché like expressions in it, and some cliché images which worked quite well though.

26FLi/La I felt sorry for Coutts, Winifred and Constance and people in general, because they often are unhappy for reasons like in this story. I still liked the story.

27FLa The story did not evoke any strong emotions either way. It was well written but it remained somehow detached.

Thus it seems that at least the overt emotional responses can be very different even though the readers' understanding is the same.\(^{16}\) Possibly Bleich could show either that

\(^{16}\) In the section titled “Influence of the readers' own experiences and personal concerns” I will present the situations where an association to personal life seems to have affected the reader's interpretation of the text and his or her emotional response to it. Hence, in some cases the data suggests a clear connection between the emotional response and the interpretation, but such situations are rather rare.
the covert subjective motivations of these readers are similar or show how the same interpretations follow from different subjective motivations. Since Bleich does not discuss similarity in answers, it is unclear how they should be explained in his framework. However, perhaps we may ask whether it is sensible to assume that interpretations which seem to follow from common meanings of words and a common understanding of human motivations also have to have a subjective motivation.

The fact that different readers seem to have understood different aspects of the text in the same way, and that these common interpretations can often be connected with particular passages seems to support Iser's assumption that the text can guide readers. The chain of inferences that seems to exist between many of the common ideas is also in line with Iser's assumption that reading involves creating gestalts. However, although Iser's basic assumption seems sound, his theory does not explain how the text guides the reader.

Fish could tell us that the readers who agree belong to the same interpretive community; they have approached the text with the same assumptions. These assumptions are determined by the cultural institutions which shape the readers thinking. One observation we might then make is that since all of these readers are Finnish, and many of them have even went to the same university, their thinking seems to be shaped by the same cultural institutions. Thus it seems they should share the same interpretive strategies and produce exactly the same interpretations. But, instead, their interpretations overlap to differing degrees. Therefore, it is seems the concept of an interpretive community as those who agree is not very helpful. Furthermore, even if people are constrained by their cultural institutions, these constraints still seem to leave room for various choices.

In Wittgenstein's view, understanding language is related to the practise of using signs and an understanding of the human activities language use is part of. If we were to adopt Wittgenstein's view of language, we could explain the similarity in the answers by assuming that due to their knowledge of language and understanding of
people, the readers have formed a similar view of the sense in which the words have been used in different parts of the text.

This view has the following advantages compared to those suggested by Fish, Iser, Bleich and Holland. We do not have to assume that readers, as it were, always decide to produce the text from some point of view, as Fish seems to assume. Rather, we can assume that as they read, the verbal expressions will give them different impressions and they will weigh these impressions against each other to find the most plausible overall interpretation. We can also allow that through their linguistic training and their understanding of other people, readers can be led to pay attention to issues that are not a personal concern to them, or recognise thought models they do not necessarily subscribe to. Thus we do not have to assume, as Bleich and Holland do, that the readers' conclusions always depend on their subjective motives or the needs of their identities. Wittgenstein's view of language as an activity governed by habits and rules also explains how the text can guide the readers, and thus avoids the problem of Iser's theory. Finally, Wittgenstein is the only one of these theorists who explicitly recognises that our understanding of human behaviour is an essential part of our understanding of language.

2.2. Agreement and variety on the level of questions and texts

When introducing the construction of the survey, I suggested that some questions had a special rationale behind them. For example, I wanted to see whether readers would agree on matters that were mentioned only in passing or how they would interpret matters which I thought could be seen in two ways. This section is devoted to examining how the agreement varies between different kinds of questions.

The questions can be divided roughly into three main categories according to the number of shared interpretations they have evoked. These categories are: questions that evoke very similar interpretations with one main theme, questions that evoke a few common interpretations, and questions that yield various observations. Because sometimes a group of readers offers an interpretation that opposes the view expressed
by the rest, I have also created an auxiliary "opposing opinions" category. The questions in this category also belong to one of the main categories, and it only contains questions where both of the opposing opinions have more than one supporter. If only one person has expressed an opposing view, the question has been placed into the appropriate main category, and the exceptional view is introduced in the section "Exceptional interpretations".

I have treated the questions in this manner because it is useful to separate general tendencies from individual exceptions, and distinguish situations where the answers concentrate on a few interpretations from cases where no shared views exist, even if the common interpretations oppose each other. These distinctions are important because conceivably the situations in which the readership is divided between two opposing views are different from situations where only one reader arrives at an unusual conclusion. Similarly, one might expect that situations where several readers agree have some characteristics that distinguish them from situations where there are no widely shared views.

The first category contains questions where the answers clearly concentrate on one theme. In answers to these questions 15-24 readers express very similar views. For example, when asked about Coutts' relationship to women in text A, eighteen readers wrote either about the opposition between the women or the duality in Coutts' feelings for them.\(^{17}\)

In the answers to questions placed in the "a few common interpretations" category, one idea is mentioned by 10-15 readers, and a few others by 4-8 readers.\(^{18}\) Some readers may mention more than one of the common ideas. For example, when asked about the sergeant's relationships to other people in text B, thirteen readers talk

\(^{17}\) However, the answers may and often do contain individual observations in addition to ideas repeated by many readers.

\(^{18}\) The questions which addressed the characters' characteristics and their values, i.e. questions 1ab, 3a and 5ab for texts A and B, and questions 1ab, 2a and 4ab for text C, have been included in this category, but they present a special case in the sense that in addition to common interpretations, answers to these questions contained also many unique observations.
about his reservedness and eight suggest that he is friendly. As five readers mentioned both ideas, together they represent the views of seventeen readers.

The main characteristic of the answers to questions in the "various interpretations" category is that several different interpretations have a few supporters. Usually there is one idea that is mentioned 6-9 times and three or four ideas mentioned 3-6 times. Again, some readers may have mentioned more than one of the ideas. For example, when asked about the sergeant's attitude towards life, the following ideas emerged: he is troubled by the contrast between home and work (mentioned 8 times), he is very family-oriented (5), he is missing something (6), he is afraid of reality (4) and he is happy (5). In this case, seven readers mentioned two of these ideas, and thus they represent the views of twenty-one readers. However, as some of the questions fit these categories better than others, this categorisation is only a rough way of indicating whether the readers tend to concentrate on the same theme or are split in several small groups when faced with a particular question.

The way in which the questions fall into these categories is shown in Table 1.19 Since many of the questions are rather long, I have used the question numbers and different notations to refer to the questions. The questions that are related to a quotation from the text contain the key word of the quotation in quotation marks. In the discussion, the notation "A 12" refers to question 12 of questionnaire A. Bold typeface is used in the table to highlight some patterns in the distribution. Questions which address an issue that I thought could be interpreted in two ways are followed by "OP". Questions which asked the reader to explain a word are followed by "W", and questions which ask the reader to relate the matter described in a quotation to reality are marked with "R". Questions that asked the reader to comment a contrast in the text are marked with "CTR".

19 Questions which ask the reader to indicate whether they share a characteristic or value with a character, such as questions 1c, 3b, 5c for text A and B and questions 1c, 2b, 4c for text C are not included in the table. Questions A 13 and C 14b are also left out because they ask the readers to discuss their views about a matter in reality rather than their views about the text. Question C 12 is left out because although the question asked the readers to discuss their understanding of the text as well as relate it to reality, nine readers talked only about their understanding of the matter in reality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text A</th>
<th>Text B</th>
<th>Text C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very similar interpretations</strong></td>
<td><strong>A few common interpretations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various interpretations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 relationship to women</td>
<td>9 “lingering” by the board</td>
<td>5 relationship to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 thinking about a “son”</td>
<td>6 relationship to sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12a the “hairy bodies” W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opposing views</strong></td>
<td><strong>Table 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 meaning of work</td>
<td>4 meaning of work</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Winifred’s “outspokenness” OP</td>
<td>10 the “effect” of the soldiers’ words W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 the “match” Winifred and Coutts would make OP</td>
<td>12b “attitude” towards peers R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 sympathy towards Coutts OP</td>
<td>12c the reason for the “contrast” in his life R, CTR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 thoughts about “suburban” life R, OP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 looking for a “cause” for fighting R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 function of the cleaning woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 attitude towards life</td>
<td>7 attitude towards life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Winifred as “intense and unnatural” W</td>
<td>8 why does he want to be “tough” R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Coutts’ desire to be “nailed to a cross”</td>
<td>9 what is the meaning of “childish” W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Coutts’ desire to be “nailed to a cross”</td>
<td>10 the significance of the “straight road” R</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14a the “ambiguity” of the girl R</td>
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The first observation one can make is that the readers tend to form similar views of aspects that are discussed in large parts of the text, such as the male and female characters and the protagonist's relationship to other people in text A and B. The answers had a particularly clear theme when related to the protagonist's relationship to women in
text A and C and the protagonist's relationship to sex in text C. Issues that were not
directly discussed but had to be inferred from the text as a whole, such as the
protagonists' attitude towards life in all the texts, and the drill sergeant's attitude towards
sex in text B, were seen in various ways. Work, which was mentioned only briefly in texts
A and C, evoked opposing opinions for all the texts. Several readers also pointed out that
the scarcity of direct references made it difficult to decide how Coutts feels about work in
text A.

The division of the questions based on a quotation from the text is much
more complex. Three of them evoked exceptionally similar answers, seven evoked a few
interpretations and eleven a number of observations. As these questions had different
motivations, they can be divided into subgroups, and on this level some correlations
suggest themselves. One subgroup is formed by the questions which addressed an issue
that could be interpreted in two ways (questions A 10, 12, 14, B 13 and C 15 marked with
"OP"). All these questions did actually divide the readership and can be found in the
"opposing opinions" category. Apart from question B 13, the answers to these questions
also concentrated on the two opposing views, which is why questions A 10, 12, 14 and
C 15 are placed in the "a few common interpretations" category. The answers to question
B 13 contained many different ideas and therefore the question is in the "various
interpretations" category.

Another subgroup is formed by questions which asked the reader to explain
an expression, i.e. the questions marked by "W" in the table. Three of them (A 9, B 10 and
C 9) evoked various interpretations but one (A 12a) evoked exceptionally similar
responses. Three questions pointed out a contrast in the text and asked the readers to
explain it (B 12c, 15, C 11, marked with "CTR"). In two cases (B 15, C 11) the readers
understood the contrast similarly, but in one case (B 12c) various ideas were connected
with it. Many questions also asked the reader to relate the matter described in the
quotation to reality (B 12b, 12c, 13, 14, 15 and C 8, 10, 13 and 14a, marked with "R").
Apart from question B 15 and C 13, these questions evoked various interpretations. A
common characteristic of the three questions based on a quotation which evoked very
similar interpretations, i.e. questions B 9, 11 and 12a, is that the interpretations seem to be closely connected with expressions that appear near the quotation (see page 81).

Hence it seems that the readers tended to form different interpretations when asked to explain a particular expression, asked to relate the quotation with reality, or when the question addressed an issue which I thought could be interpreted in opposing ways.

If one compares the distribution of the questions between the different texts, one might note that text B seems to have a different profile from texts A and C. There are more questions that have evoked very similar answers, but all of these are related to details rather than central themes in the text. An exceptionally high number of questions have also evoked various interpretations. For example, the sergeant's attitude towards sex and life were seen in various and opposing ways, and both of these issues need to be inferred from the text as a whole. But, his attitude towards work was seen in various and opposing ways even though long passages of the text describe the sergeant at work or thinking about it.

One possible reason for the greater variety in views related to text B is that it seems to contain more themes than texts A and C, and it also contains a lot of contradictory expressions. In texts A and C, the centre of attention is the male protagonist's relationship to women, but text B concentrates in turn on, for example, male relationships, social and racial tensions, relationships between men and women and the contrast between work and home. In addition, the protagonist's thoughts and actions often seem contradictory. For example:

How unreal to him were these soldiers and their hairy bodies and their talk and their rough ways. How temporary. How different from his own life, his real life with her. (241)

They were good rough-and-ready fellows all... (242)

And again there were the voices of the boys in the barrack. Their crudeness, their hardness, even their baseness—qualities that seemed to be taking root in the very hearts of those men... (253)

What great fortune it was to have a wife who could understand and to have her here beside him to hear and to comprehend everything that was on his heart and mind. (254)
And the happiness and completeness of his marriage could not seem so large a thing. (255)

He would tell her everything... (254)

Impulsively, almost without realizing what he was doing, he sat up on the other side of the bed. "I wasn't really thinking about the flowers," he said... (255)

In these quotations, the sergeant constantly shifts from one view to the opposite: he moves back and forth between seeing the soldiers as crude and as good fellows, from emphasising the importance of his marriage to doubting it, and from a decision to be honest to using a white lie. In Iser's terminology one might suggest that these conflicts are gaps which the reader has to bridge either by finding an explanation that can accommodate the fluctuating viewpoints or by giving precedence to one impression over an opposing one.

I felt that due to the many themes and contrasts in text B, it was difficult to find a key idea that would help to determine which details to consider most important. It is possible to interpret the text coherently by emphasising either one of two opposing impressions. For example, one might conclude that the sergeant is mainly happy but slightly bothered by aspects of his work or decide that he is very troubled by his work though also happy about his marriage. It seems that the decision depends mainly on one's own standard of happiness. I believe these standards can be very different and this could be one reason why there is more variety in responses to text B.²⁰

In sum, it seems readers tend to agree on issues that are discussed in large parts of the text and their views are likely to vary more when related to particular expressions, issues that are mentioned only in passing or that are not directly discussed but need to be inferred from the text as a whole. Issues which I thought could be interpreted in two ways also were interpreted in both ways. However, in two cases out of three the readers explained a contrast in the text in much the same way. I have also

²⁰If one wants to analyse the matter in terms of the author's intentions of craftsmanship, there seem to be four possible explanations for the contradictions in the text. First, the writer may not be in full control of his material. Second, he may wish to give the impression that the protagonist is unsure of his opinions. Third, the contradictions could be due to a combination of the first and second option. Fourth, the writer may wish to be indeterminate. Personally, I believe the indeterminacy is deliberate because the fluctuation in the protagonist's thinking seems very human.
suggested that textual features, such as the abundance of themes or many contradictory expressions, could be one reason why many questions related to text B have evoked different and opposing opinions.

If one accepts the idea that the text can guide readers, it seems quite sensible that when the readers have a lot of material to base their views on, their conclusions will be similar and that brief references promote variety. If an issue is mentioned only in passing or not discussed directly, it seems the text both guides and restricts interpretation less than when there are many references to a matter. When the references are scarce, it seems readers have to rely more on their general understanding of the matter in real life, and differences in attentiveness, personal concerns or beliefs can affect the interpretation more than when a matter is the centre of attention in a text. The same applies to situations where the text contains many contradictory expressions.

However, it is also somewhat puzzling that although the readers' overall understanding of a story is similar and, as we have seen in section "Common interpretations, the text and references to it", they often refer to the same passages when discussing a common interpretation, their answers tend to vary when asked to explain a particular expression. One may wonder how the similar overall understanding comes about if readers associate different ideas with individual expressions. Here are some possible explanations that could perhaps be examined further in the future.

In some cases, it seems possible that the readers' understanding is actually more similar than the expressions in their answers suggest. For example, when commenting on the meaning of "intense and unnatural" in text A, only three readers refer explicitly to sexuality, and three others to passion. Yet it seems plausible that those who suggest that Winifred is "exciting", "irresistible" or "different from ordinary women who conform to social norms" are also thinking about the sexual tension between the characters although they do not explicitly say so. In order to check this, one would have to discuss the answers with the readers. Some variety may also be due to the fact that people try to offer new perspectives in each answer rather than repeat points they have
already made. Since an overwhelming majority of the questions which asked the readers to relate a matter to reality evoked various interpretations, it might also be worth investigating whether the request to compare the text with reality increases variety in the answers.21

One might also suggest that expressions in the text contribute to our understanding of it in different ways. One does not necessarily connect clearly formulated ideas with all the expressions in a text although they contribute to a particular conclusion on some level. This idea is perhaps akin to Iser's view of the passive syntheses. When asked to explain such an expression, one might suddenly feel that there are many possibilities and it is difficult to pin down the meaning of the expression. For example, in my reading of text C, I feel the passage on page 10 which contains the word "childish" contributes to my conclusion that the young man is immature, but I feel the word itself could refer to various things and I am not quite sure which one I find most likely.

As a contrast, some expressions seem to answer a question that has begun to puzzle one while reading, or suggest a point of view that gives a particular colouring to the whole text. These expressions one remembers very clearly and refers to when asked to explain an impression. An example of the first kind could be the words "bore" and "fear" on page 102 of text A, which seem to finally explain why Coutts is so torn between the two women. An example of the latter kind could be the discussion on free will on page 91 of text A. When one first reads it, it does not necessarily seem to have any special significance, but after reading the whole text, one may feel that one of the questions the text raises is crystallised in the words "Why do we do things" (ibid.).

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21 In this study most of the questions which asked the reader to relate the text to reality were in fact a compound of two to three questions. Therefore some of the variety may simply come from the fact that readers emphasise the questions differently in their answers and may not even answer all of them, as was the case in question C 12. This problem could be eliminated by posing the questions differently. However, possibly the request to compare a description in the text with one's view of the matter in reality increases variety also in a more profound sense. It could be that this request shifts the reader's attention from searching for an explanation that best fits the text to possible explanations of the matter in general. Thus examining the matter further might give more information about the possible distinction between the reader's own beliefs and the thought models he or she can recognise in the text.
This difference in the way expressions contribute to our understanding could be one reason why the readers' overall understanding of a text seems to be more similar than the ideas they connect with individual expressions, and why some expressions are noted by many readers and understood in the same way while various ideas are connected with some other expressions. One might also point to Iser's idea that the reading experience is a journey through different viewpoints and one's overall understanding emerges from the interaction of these viewpoints. In this framework, one might suggest that even if each reader understands some expressions in a unique way, the interaction of the viewpoints will lead most readers to the same overall conclusion.

Now someone might protest that all of these considerations are based on the assumption that the text guides readers, or to be more exact, that readers guide themselves by the common meanings of words and their understanding of people. Bleich and Holland might suggest that rather than being a function of the text, the interpretations are a function of the readers' personal concerns or identity themes. Fish could say that the readers belong to different interpretive communities. Although I believe the readers' subjective motives or psychological needs can be one factor that affects the ideas they connect with particular expressions, I find it difficult to see how Bleich and Holland could explain why the readers seem to form more similar interpretations of text A and C than text B, or why they tend to agree more on issues that are discussed in large parts of the text than those which are mentioned briefly. Fish's idea of the interpretive communities cannot help to explain the matter either. It seems that unless one wants to assume that the variation in the level of agreement between different questions and texts is illusory or coincidental, the only plausible conclusion is that textual features influence interpretation.

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22 Holland could perhaps suggest that the "matrix of psychological possibilities" (5RR 12) offered by some texts is larger than some others, but even in this case the variation would be explained with a property of the text.
2.3. Opposing opinions

The opposing opinions seem to be related to four kinds of issues: 1) issues that are mentioned only in passing, 2) issues that are not directly addressed in the text but have to be inferred from the text as a whole, 3) issues that are suggested by one part of the text but undermined by another, and 4) passing judgement on a character. One of the most interesting aspects of these answers is that the opposing parties seem to have paid attention to the same textual features, and attached similar implications to them. Therefore these answers offer an opportunity to examine Fish's claim that readers produce the formal features of a text differently. One of the examples also offers an insight into the debate between Iser and Fish on whether gaps can be considered a property of the text or a consequence of the reader's assumptions.

When determining the protagonists' attitude towards work, the readers seem to have paid attention to the same textual features in all the texts. In responses to text A, twenty-one readers suggest that work represents "just" a means or means very little to Coutts, but three conclude it is important to him. Eight readers point out that there are only a few references to work, and four of them suggest it makes it difficult to determine his attitude. In total, seven readers say it is difficult to get an understanding of what work means to Coutts. Three readers think the scarcity of references implies work is not important, and four draw this conclusion from the passage on page 97 where Coutts says that nothing seems to matter. Two of the three readers who think work is important echo the idea that nothing matters by suggesting that work "is not enough to make life meaningful". The third reader seems to acknowledge that the scarcity of references implies that work is not important when he concludes that work means "[p]robably more than is said in the story" (reader 8). Reader 8 suggests that work is an integral part of Coutts' way of life and thinks Coutts appreciates its simple rules—perhaps as a contrast to his complicated love life. The other two readers do not explain their view but suggest that work "is naturally important" or simply that "it is important".
In responses to text C, twenty-one readers assume work represents mainly negative things to the young man. It is suggested that work means restriction or control (11) and that it invades his privacy (4). Work is also thought to be a tedious (7) thing he is forced to do (6). Nevertheless, three readers assume work is important to him. Ten readers refer to the opening passages on page 11 as a source for their view that work represents negative things to the man. Again the negative tone of this passage seems to be recognised also in the answers of the opposing party. One reader suggests that work is "too important" and another one notes that "he's a bit annoyed he cannot leave it behind." The most important reason why they think work is important to him is that it "comprises most of his life" and also that he "thinks of it even at [sic] his spare time". One reader also points out that if he is wealthy enough to drive a sports car "it's hard to see why [...] he would hang on to such an entirely unrewarding job", and concludes that probably a "part of him actually likes" it. Hence it seems that both parties have paid attention to the same verbal expressions, but while one party has concentrated on the negative tone of such wordings as "compulsory boredom" and "wretchedly little time he had left for his private life" (p. 11), the opposing party has concentrated on the proposition that he spends a lot of time at work—and reasoned that if someone spends all his time at work, he must enjoy it, especially since he seems wealthy enough to quit. In this case the scarcity of references is not mentioned by the readers, perhaps because the passage on work is charged with emotion.

Text B differs from A and C in the sense that large parts of it are devoted to describing the sergeant at work or thinking about his work. Yet, the readers saw his relationship to work in various ways. It was suggested that work is a duty (8), a means (6), a forum to carry out his values (3), important (7) and not so important (7). One detail in the text was mentioned by both of the opposing parties. Five of the readers who think work is not very important to him suggest that he is nevertheless interested in it as he reads about war history in his free time. Two readers think the reading suggests that work is important to him.
These three examples offer a good opportunity to examine the idea introduced by Fish and adopted by Bleich according to which readers produce the formal features of a text by applying a particular interpretive strategy to it. Different interpretive strategies presumably produce different formal features. In "Interpreting the Variorum" Fish suggests that formal features are the points at which readers have performed an interpretive act (163). It seems Coutts' declaration that nothing matters, the sergeant's reading and the young man's ponderings on his work have been such points for readers in both opposing parties. Moreover, it seems that the readers have attached a similar implication to the words although their final conclusions have been different. We can thus ask whether it is sensible to say that the readers have produced different formal features and interpreted the text differently because of these different formal features.

To me these examples suggest that rather than "producing" formal features, readers tend to react to verbal expressions in much the same way and consequently attach similar meanings to them. The difference in the final conclusions seems to be the result of weighing the impressions related to the aforementioned textual features against other parts of the text differently. For example, I believe both those who think work is important to the drill sergeant and those who have an opposing view have associated the fact that the sergeant reads about war history with the idea that he is interested in his work. But while one party has concluded that work must therefore be important to him, the other party has given more weight to the impression that he considers his family life more important.23

It also seems plausible to assume that when the references to an issue are scarce, as in texts A and C, or contradictory, as in text B, the guiding effect of the text is diminished and the readers' attentiveness as well as their understanding of the matter in real life have a bigger impact on their final conclusion. For example, one might assume that since text A does not explicitly suggest that Coutts has strong positive or negative

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23 Such an impression might arise, for example, from the line "How different from his own life, his real life with her." (241).
feelings towards his work, the readers have to resort to their understanding of what work usually means to people. Both interpretations reflect very typical views of work: it can be important in itself or then a means to something else. In the interpretations of text C, the determining factor seems to be whether one believes that devoting a lot of time to work necessarily implies that it is important. In the interpretations of text B, one's understanding of what are signs of being interested in or distressed by one's work have a central role.

The view that work is important might in two cases be related to the reader's personal experiences. One reader draws this conclusion from all the three texts, and his answers reveal that work is also very important to him. Possibly this personal view of work has affected his interpretation. Text C reminded one reader of a similar hitchhiking game he had played and he identified strongly with the young man. He suggested that work is very important to him, and the strong identification may have contributed to this view.

The readers' views on the sergeant's sexuality offer an opportunity to discuss the debate between Fish and Iser on whether the gaps are in the text, as Iser claims, or depend on the assumptions with which the reader approaches the text, as Fish claims. When asked about the sergeant's sexuality, eight readers thought the sergeant is 

**reserved and shy** about sex and thirteen readers concluded that his **relationship to sex is normal**. When discussing their views, the readers point to two aspects of the text: the discussion in the barracks and the fact that the couple does not have sex in the story. Twelve readers refer to the discussion in the barracks, four concluding that the sergeant is inhibited and eight suggesting that the soldiers' joking presents a contrast to the sergeant's "normal" or family-oriented sexuality. The lack of sexual intercourse is pointed out by three readers, and they all connect it with his inhibitedness. One of these readers nevertheless assumes that sex is to be expected after the end of the story. This assumption is explicitly expressed by one other reader, and it seems implicit in several other answers. In addition, one reader points out that it is hard to say anything about their sexuality since the references to it are so scarce.
Here it seems that whether one perceives the lack of sexual intercourse as a gap depends on one’s assumptions. If one expects newly-weds to jump into bed shortly after they see each other again, then the lack of sexual intercourse in the story is bound to appear a curious gap that catches one’s attention. The expectation that the couple will make love is also enhanced by the soldiers’ hints.\textsuperscript{24} If one finds the couple’s behaviour normal or assumes that they make love after the story ends, then the lack of sexual intercourse during the narrative is not a gap that needs explaining. When the gap is defined in this way, this example seems to offer strong support to Fish’s claim that the gaps depend on our assumptions.

However, one may also assume that both parties have perceived a contrast between the sex-centred discussions in the barracks and the lack of references to sex once the sergeant comes home. One group has bridged this gap by concluding that he is more inhibited than the others, and the other group finds him more "normal" or "family-oriented" than his peers. Perceiving the contrast as a gap still depends on one’s assumptions, but one may ask how likely it is that the readers’ assumptions would be so different that they would not perceive this contrast? Thus although Fish is correct in his suggestion that in an absolute sense the gaps always depend on our assumptions, it often seems plausible to assume that the assumptions are shared to the extent that most readers will perceive a gap in the same place.

The sergeant’s attitude towards life is an example of an issue that needs to be inferred from the text as a whole. Eight readers talk about the contrast between home and work and five think he is a family man. Four readers think he is happy, but ten readers imply something is amiss by suggesting that he is missing something (6) or afraid of reality (5). When trying to determine the sergeant’s attitude towards life the

\textsuperscript{24} The clearest examples are the song on page 238 and the following lines:

"But then you and me won’t be all fagged out tomorrow, eh, Slim!"
"No," [...] "we’ll be able to hold our backs up straight and sort of carry ourselves like soldiers, as some won’t feel like doing." (239)

"I wouldn't take no book along. What you think you want with a book this night?" (240)
reader is presented with a contrast between the sergeant's appreciation of his family life (e.g. p. 254) and the distraction caused by the outside world (p. 255). It would seem that one's view of whether he is happy or unsatisfied depends primarily on how serious a problem one considers this distraction to be.

One's view of the way the soldier's words affect the sergeant also seems to be tied to one's overall understanding of his situation. Seven readers concluded that the effect is smaller now but three thought it is bigger. Other suggestions were that the words embarrass him (7), make him fear that he will become like the others (4) or that he is disturbed by their relationship to women (3).

Five of the questions that ended up evoking opposing opinions were posed because I felt that different parts of the text suggested opposing interpretations and I was curious to see which way the readers would lean. One of them addressed Winifred's outspokenness in text A. The question was based on the line "He hated it that she could not bear outspokenness" (97). Eleven readers concluded that Winifred bears outspokenness. Three point out that both avoid things they would like to say, four suggest she does not bear outspokenness on things that hurt her, and three think she does not bear outspokenness. Those who think she does not bear outspokenness suggest that she speaks "obliquely and somewhat vaguely" and uses "irony and sarcasm". The other party emphasises Coutts' own evasiveness. One reader also suggests that "Coutts seems to invent these 'traits' as he really cannot judge himself" and refers to the following passage: "He was in a position where he was not himself, and he hated her for putting him there, forgetting that it was he who had come, like a moth to the candle" (95-96). The "forgetting" in this passage was one reason why I also thought that Coutts' judgements are not reliable and considered it worthwhile to pose the question on Winifred's outspokenness. Moreover, I thought Coutts understood Winifred's comments far too well to be able to complain about their indirectness and did not think she avoided delicate issues. Like some of the readers, I also thought it was Coutts himself who was
the evasive one. Possibly these details influenced also those other readers who concluded that she does not fear outspokenness. The determining factor in these interpretations seems to be whether one emphasises the form of address, which is often metaphorical and indirect on both sides, or the remarkable successfulness of communication with these indirect means.

In another question I asked the readers whether Coutts and Winifred would be an impossible match as two of their lines imply. Fifteen readers concluded that they would not be an impossible match and six of them suggested they say these lines because they are afraid (e.g. reader 24, see page 65). However, nine readers thought they would be an impossible match. One argument in this group was that because "Coutts needs to be superior while Winifred won't yield" they would be fighting constantly. Another argument was that their relationship is about passion rather than love. Like the six readers mentioned above, I also thought that their lines were a face-saving action motivated by the fear that the other person does not respond to one's feelings. Yet, the decisive element in these interpretations seems to be one's view of true love. If one thinks Coutts and Winifred's behaviour reveals deep love, one is prone to conclude that they are a good couple. If, on the other hand, one thinks their relationship is a destructive power struggle or "just about passion", then it seems doomed.

I also asked the readers whether the sergeant's thoughts on suburban life had truly changed in text B. Fourteen readers thought they have been changed either by restricted life in the army (4), marriage (8) or the fact that his rebellion against his

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25 To me, a good example of his evasiveness is the following exchange on page 98:

'Yes; one is never at peace with oneself till one understands.'
'Understands what?' he asked brutally. He knew she meant that she wanted to understand the situation he and she were in.

Here Winifred picks up a delicate issue, and though Coutts understands her perfectly, he evades the discussion by insisting on a more blunt form of address!

26 The lines in question are the following:

'You know, Winifred, we should only drive each other into insanity, you and I: become abnormal.' (104)
'Yes,' she said at length; 'if we were linked together we should only destroy each other.' (105)
parents has been subdued (2). Three readers assumed his thoughts have not actually changed, and one of them suggested that he has talked himself into believing they have. Another three expressed doubt on whether his thoughts had fully changed. I asked this question because the many contrasts in text B had given me the sense that the sergeant was not honest with himself but was constantly trying to talk himself into believing that things are fine.

The question on the girl’s true nature in text C was based on a quotation that suggested she was becoming herself through the game.27 Fourteen readers thought she was disowning herself in the game and nine thought she is a little bit of both. Four suggested that her real nature lies beyond the roles she is tied up with. In the first group, the readers emphasised the idea that she was only playing the game, and in the second group they suggested that “all the things we can act are in some way part of us”. I asked the question because I felt various details in the text underlined that she was playing an alien role rather than becoming herself. For example:

[...] since she had stripped off her clothes, she had also stripped away her dissimulation, and that being naked meant that she was now herself [...] She felt embarrassed and on her face appeared the smile, which really belonged to her—a shy and confused smile. (23 emphasis added)

[...] she tried to go on with the game, even though she no longer knew how. (24 emphasis added)

I feel that the parts I have highlighted in these quotations suggest that there is such a thing as her true self, and that it is very different from the role she played. Possibly these details have also influenced those other readers who think she was disowning herself, though only one of them indicated it by referring to the paragraph which contains the lines of the first quotation. But, again the decisive element seems to be one’s view of human nature. If one believes that everything we can act is a part of us, then one can only conclude that the girl must be “a little bit of both”.

27 The lines in question are the following:
“Perhaps the girl supposed that by means of the game she was disowning herself, but wasn’t it the other way round? Wasn’t she becoming herself only through the game?” (16)
The question whether Coutts evokes sympathy is also based on a contrast I perceived in the text, though the contrast is related to the general feel of the story rather than easily isolatable excerpts. In the other similar questions I was primarily interested in seeing whether other readers had paid attention to details which I thought opposed the quotation in the question, whereas in this question I was also curious to see whether and on what grounds the readers might condemn the character. I felt that many of Coutts' actions invited condemnation but the way in which he and his feelings were presented sought sympathy for him. The readers' views seem to be also divided along these lines. Seven readers sympathised with him, six sympathised a bit or "understood" him, and eight readers did not sympathise. Those who sympathised with him referred to his feelings suggesting that he was very afraid, or feeling "clumsy and embarrassed". The other group seemed to concentrate on his actions and accused him of cowardly or overdramatic behaviour. However, it is difficult to know to what extent the sympathy is due to textual features because the readers' values concerning fidelity and their general tendency to be forgiving or judgemental have most likely also contributed to their view.

The last issue which evoked opposing opinions is more clearly related to judgements. While six readers found the young girl in text C very charming, nine readers thought she was annoying. Her charm was not further explained but the most common reason for irritation was her naivety. One reader identified strongly with the girl's nervousness about her body, and possibly this identification was one reason why she found her charming.

In sum, the readership has been divided when there are only a few references to an issue, there are many contradictions in the text, the issue is not directly discussed or the question has addressed an issue which I thought could be interpreted in two ways. In addition, there are a few opposing judgements of a character. The answers related to the characters' attitude towards work suggest that the members of the opposing parties have paid attention to the same textual features and seem to have attached similar meanings to the verbal expressions though their final conclusions have been different. The answers related to the drill sergeant's sexuality suggest that
perceiving a gap depends on one's assumptions, but one can also ask whether it is
sensible to assume that the readers' assumptions are so different that they would not
perceive the gap in some form.

How might our theorists explain these opposing opinions? Iser would
probably suggest that the scarcity of the references and the contradictions increase the
indeterminacy of the text, and that the readers have realised different potential
interpretations of the text. He might add that one reason for these differences are
differences in attentiveness. Fish could suggest that the readers have used different
interpretive strategies to create the formal features of the text and their view of it.

However, as it seems that the members of the opposing parties have paid attention to the
same verbal expressions and attached similar meanings to them, the suggestion that
they produce different formal features seems misleading. It seems rather that the readers
produce the same formal features but give different weight to the impressions arising
from various parts of the text. Since they are aware of an alternative interpretation, it
seems they also choose between different possibilities.

Holland and Bleich might suggest that what I have called differences in the
readers' understanding of people are in fact reflections of unique identity themes or
disquieting emotions and the means to calm them. The challenge of their approach would
be to show how the similar conclusions within a group follow from unique psychological
processes. Although this may be possible, it seems more plausible to assume that similar
conclusions follow from similar reasoning rather than unique psychological processes.

But, psychological factors can occasionally explain the view of some reader. For
example, it seems that strong identification with a character might affect one's
conclusions.

If we were to approach these opposing opinions from a Wittgensteinian
perspective, our explanation could refer to the following factors. The starting point is that
our understanding of signs depends on the common practises of using them. However,
as most signs have different uses, a given expression can be understood in different
ways. The context of using the word will be used to narrow down the plausible options.
Therefore, if there are very few contextual clues, or the references to an issue are scarce or contradictory, the text gives the readers less sign-posts by which to guide their interpretation and they have to rely much more on their imagination. In such cases, the differences in people’s understanding of human motivations become accentuated. Sometimes differences in attentiveness may contribute to these differences, and sometimes personal experiences of a similar situation can colour the reader’s understanding of the situation. Occasionally, a reader may also have a psychological motivation to favour a particular interpretation.

Thus Wittgenstein does not offer one principle that would explain each particular interpretation. Rather, his insights explain how a text can guide readers, and what the limitations of this guidance are. If we then want to explain a particular interpretation, we can use our own understanding of language and people to examine whether the interpretation seems to spring from a different understanding of people, from neglecting some textual detail or from a psychological motivation.

2.4. Individual elements in the answers

Thus far we have concentrated on interpretations which have been expressed by a group of readers. It is therefore time to examine the unique aspects of the interpretations. In the following sections I will first introduce the situations where only one reader expresses a particular view and then examine how associations to personal life or personal concerns may have affected the interpretations. As Holland and Bleich both stress the subjective nature of interpretation, these sections are particularly relevant for assessing their theories.

2.4.1. Exceptional interpretations

Cases where one reader has formed a view that opposes the view expressed by all other readers are rare. In the interpretations of text A, there is only one major and two minor
exceptions. By major exception I mean an interpretation that shows in several answers of the same reader and suggests that his or her view of the whole text or character deviates considerably from that of the other readers. Minor exceptions are related to particular questions or only one aspect of the character. The first minor exception is that one reader finds Coutts' attitude towards life "generally positive", while the others stress his lack of purpose or confusion. Another reader suggests that Coutts goes to see Winifred to "bring her pleasure", whereas others imply that Coutts' motivation for his visit is rather more selfish. The major exception is that one reader thinks it is the women who have their way in the story rather than Coutts.

20FO [...] Both of the young women characters (Laura and Winifred) introduced in the story are able to wrap him around their little fingers, and although he occasionally feels a rush of rage at being pushed around (line 273), it is quickly subdued. [...] Line 273 appears on page 95 after Winifred refuses to mount the tram-car, and as a result, Miss Syfurt is disappointed and Coutts furious. Admittedly, this is an instance where Winifred gets her way. In another answer, the reader suggested that Coutts is bewitched by Winifred's looks and in the end Winifred gets what she wants, "just one kiss", while Coutts is hurt. The expression "just one kiss" suggests that this last conclusion rests on the sentence "He saw her thus, knew that she wanted no more of him than that kiss" (107). If one assumes that Coutts' judgement of the situation is reliable, then this is a possible conclusion.

Nevertheless, it seems most readers saw Winifred as the powerless one, and one answer offers a revealing account of how these readers probably interpreted the aforementioned sentence:

24FO [...] Yes, I do not completely understand that thing about Winifred not wanting more than a kiss from him or is it only because she knows she can't have him completely. Also I can't understand the "cutting short like death" bit [page 108]. Because he thinks she doesn't want him? Or because she doesn't want him? But I can't understand the whole story if she doesn't. (emphasis original)

It seems those who thought Winifred is at Coutts' mercy concluded either that Coutts does not interpret the situation correctly, or that Winifred holds back because she knows
she cannot have what she wants anyway. This answer suggests very clearly what sort of considerations of human motivations are related to interpreting the aforementioned sentence. If one thinks that Winifred loves Coutts, then one would expect her to be aroused by him rather than be content only with a kiss. One solution to this conflict is to assume that Coutts does not understand the situation correctly. If one wants to believe that Coutts is correct, then it seems one has to either assume that Winifred has a reason to hold back or that she is a rather exceptional woman in the sense that she loses interest as soon as a man kisses her.

There seem to be at least five possible ways to explain reader 20's exceptional conclusion. One alternative is to propose as Fish might do that this reader belongs to a different community of readers who assume that a woman in this situation would only want a kiss. Bleich and Holland could suggest that either the reader's disharmonious feelings or her identity led to this conclusion. Iser could suggest that the difference is due to differences in attentiveness. In addition to these alternatives, it also seems possible that this reader does not have a different understanding of women's motivations, but concentrated so much on Coutts' judgement of the situation that she did not really consider Winifred's motivations. Another possibility is that she thought of some explanation for Winifred's reservedness but did not mention this.

The answers related to text B contained four minor exceptions. One reader thinks the drill sergeant's "thinking is so 'straightforward' it would seem almost impossible he would ever have to problematise anything in his life", while others suggest he is "constantly analysing his feelings and thoughts in order to find their causes" (see 9M page 69). Another exception was that one reader found the drill sergeant's attitude towards women to be "perhaps a bit sex centered (esp. because the army guys speak about that, also thinks about the women's thighs in the bus)", whereas the other readers found him either reserved about sex or having a "normal", "balanced" attitude which is not "too" sex-centred. The sergeant's attention to the women's thighs on page 242 has been noted at least by one other reader, and it is an interesting detail of the text. Here it has given rise to the view that he is sex-centred, but I think it can also be considered as a sign
that he is uncomfortable with female sexuality. The last exception to views on text B was related to question 14. One reader thought the quotation given in this question shows the drill sergeant is "militarist" while other readers seem to think he is rather questioning the point of war and trying to find a proper reason for fighting.

In the answers related to text C, it is possible to find one major exception and five minor departures from the general tendency. Three of the minor exceptions appeared in question 7, which addressed the young man's attitude towards sexuality. The majority of the readers concentrated on his chauvinism in their answers, but one reader thought he is just "tired of sex-centred relationships", another concluded that he "did not seem to have any big problems with his sexuality" and the third reader assumed that "for the man, sexuality is a natural thing that gives strength to life, at least as long as it is only an erotic charge in the air."28 The view that he does not have any major problems with his sexuality might be partly due to the contrast between the girl's nervousness and the man's unquestioning attitude towards his sexuality. To me, the text does give the impression that he does not see any problem with his relationship to sexuality, but if one puts oneself in the position of a woman who comes into contact with this kind of man, then his attitude towards female sexuality seems highly problematic, all the more so since he does not question it. Hence one possibility is that these readers have understood the question differently and concentrated on the way the man sees his sexuality rather than the way a reader might see it.

The other two minor exceptions were related to question 9, which asked the readers to ponder on the meaning of the word "childish". There was no clear main idea in the answers, but most readers connected it with something negative. Thus the positive tone of the two following answers was unusual. The first reader thought that his childishness is "mainly creativity to come up with, try out and act in different roles" (reader 31F), the second suggested it refers to "wild sexual desire; perhaps one could think of it

28 This contrast could have been included in the "opposing opinions" category, but because these three opinions differ from each other much more than the members of one party in the other questions placed in that category, it seems more appropriate to consider them here.
as the original masculine desire that the sad patterns of modernity have managed to fetter" (reader 3M). As it seems unlikely a woman would see the matter in the same way as reader 3, this response might be one example where the reader's gender affects the interpretation.

The major exception was that when the other readers condemned the man more or less fiercely, one reader found him charming: "He's what you would call a 'nice fellow'. He's responsible, happy and in love with his girlfriend. I found him very likeable. And charming, though a bit serious" (reader 32). This reader refers to the line "For this reason he welcomed every manifestation of her gaiety with the tender solicitude of a foster parent" (7) as an indication that the man is "gentle and kind". Reader 9 also points out that the beginning of page 7 gave him the impression that the man is kind (see page 72), but this impression changed soon afterwards. Reader 32 does recognise some of the aspects that the other readers have found repulsive in the young man, for example that he "regards his girlfriend's sexuality as something dirty", but instead of condemning him, she suggests an explanation for his attitude: "He's probably been cheated on."

It seems the main reason why reader 32 does not find the man repulsive is that she considers the feelings that others have condemned to be a normal part of relationships. The way in which our judgement is related to our willingness to accept something as a normal part of life is illustrated very interestingly by the answers of two readers who both had very strong feelings about the story. Reader 8 thought the man is a "pig" (see page 71) and reader 32 was most positive about him. The first pair of answers is to the question how realistic the characters are (question 17) and the second to the question whether the reader liked the story (question 19).

8M-Q17 No. I've never met people like them, and if such people exist, I'd rather go on believing they don't than know the truth. They let themselves be bound by the rules of a game they don't want to play, and this seems to serve nothing but the point of the story. It seems a neurotic thing to do.

32F-Q17 Yes, they're realistic. It's all realistic. This is how relationships are: love, jealousy, hatred, passion, ideals, joy, anger etc.

8M-Q19 Didn't like it then, didn't like it now. The thought of showing a way out of static identities is sweet enough, but I've always felt that Kundera is forcing his ideas on the reader. I feel like
the story is a very personal insult to every man and woman, the author saying "Ha! I got you! This is what you REALLY are!"

32F-Q19 I've always loved it. It's so wretched yet touching. I feel connected with the characters. It's life.

Reader 8 does not want to believe that such characters exist and consequently finds the story insulting for implying that this is what people are like. Reader 32 thinks the story captures the true nature of relationships and finds this wretched condition touching. Both of them had also read the story before, and it seems their interpretation was very much the same this time as before.

In addition to these exceptional interpretations, the answers contained two misunderstandings. One reader thought that the drill sergeant is "not a soldier by choice but because it is expected of him by the circumstances (wartime)". Here it seems the reader has tried to explain an impression shared by many, i.e. that the sergeant does not feel at home in the army, with an explanation that fits a general understanding of why someone might be in the army against his wishes, i.e. that the country is at war, but unfortunately this interpretation does not fit the text. Another reader connected the sentence "The car ran on familiarly" (88) in text A with the idea that Coutts drives a lot. A few lines earlier the text talks about a tram-car, and therefore it seems that Coutts is used to travelling in tram-cars rather than driving automobiles.

If we were to look at the exceptional interpretations presented in this section through the eyes of our theorists, how could we explain them? Iser might see these as instances where blanks have been filled differently or the gestalt formation has differed. For example, the contrast between the impression that Winifred loves Coutts and her dismissal of him could be seen as a blank which the readers have filled differently. While most readers have concluded either that Coutts' judgement is wrong or that Winifred has a reason to hold back, one reader has decided that she gets what she wants while he runs off hurt. One way to approach reader 32's conclusion that the young man in text C is charming would be to suggest that on page 7 the reader has been led to form the gestalt that the young man is kind, and while other readers have modified this view due to subsequent cues in the text, she has dismissed these competing impressions in favour
of the first one. Iser might explain these differences with differences in attentiveness or suggest that a reader has projected his or her personal norms on the text.

Fish could simply conclude that each one of these readers has different assumptions and therefore belongs to a different interpretive community. Bleich would start looking for disharmonious feelings in the reading experience that would motivate these particular interpretations, and Holland would assume that the interpretations reflect the readers' identities.

Because the young man's aggression towards the girl in text C is likely to provoke anxiety, it seems plausible that the experience of reading this text will evoke disharmonious feelings and activate psychological defence mechanisms. Hence it seems the psychological approaches of Bleich and Holland could be particularly fruitful in examining interpretations of this text. All of the exceptional views related to this text could be seen as efforts to ward off anxiety by deciding that there is nothing out of the ordinary in the man's sexuality or his behaviour. Reader 8's answer could be seen as a slightly different defence strategy where the reader admits the character's cruelty but refuses to consider it realistic. As the story evoked a lot of strong emotional reactions and contains provocative elements, it seems plausible that various psychological motivations have been involved in both the common and exceptional interpretations of this story. Yet, I would not rule out the possibility that the minor exceptions could also be due to, for example, differences in attentiveness or one's understanding of the question.

It is more difficult to suggest psychological motivations for the exceptional views related to the other texts, particularly for the minor exceptions and the misunderstandings. Possibly they could be revealed with some additional data about the reader's psychology and his or her emotional response to different elements in the text. However, I find it more plausible that at least the misunderstandings are due to differences in attentiveness. It is difficult to imagine a psychological motivation for the view that Coutts drives a lot but it is easy to see how a lapse of attention or not knowing what a tram-car is might lead to this conclusion. To this Bleich and Holland might protest that one can never know what sort of things represent threat or gratification to a particular
person, and just by looking at the answers one cannot rule out the possibility of a psychological motivation. I agree with this, but I think that based on our understanding of people, we can distinguish situations where a psychological motivation seems particularly likely from situations where it is only one possibility amongst others. From the point of view of Bleich and Holland interpretations are always psychologically motivated, but I would be willing to grant the possibility that exceptional interpretations can also have other explanations, such as differences in attentiveness, language knowledge, literary sophistication, values or one's understanding of people.

2.4.2. Influence of the readers' own experiences and personal concerns

The data also offer an opportunity to examine how associations to personal life or personal concerns, which both have a central role in Bleich's theory, might influence interpretation. I will first introduce the associations to personal life and then examine what evidence there is of the influence of personal concerns.

The readers rarely referred to their personal life apart from the questions where I asked them to compare the text with their own experiences. These questions were meant to spark a general discussion on an issue and often the answers were also on a very general level. Therefore the references to personal experiences in answers to these questions are not necessarily a very reliable way to gauge how the reader's own experiences have affected an interpretation. However, a few readers referred to their own experiences spontaneously in other contexts and these references offer an opportunity to examine how the associations to personal experiences have perhaps influenced interpretation.

One of the most interesting examples is one reader's experience of playing a hitchhiking game similar to that in text C.

Q17 The events and the characters are extremely realistic. I have had a similar experience myself. Believe it or not, but I have had the experience of having an exactly similar game with car-driving with my ex-girlfriend. It just never took such extreme forms as the one in the story. My own experience was much more fun and touched much less some tricky questions about our sexuality.
Q19  I was first amazed how closely the story corresponded to me, my previous girlfriend, and what once happened between us. I was almost relieved to find out at the end of my thinking process that I am perhaps no longer so similar to the man in the story. What comes to the woman in the story, she is certainly similar to my previous girlfriend in many respects. Furthermore, there are similarities between the relationship between the persons in the story and my relationship to my previous girlfriend. Some of those similarities are responsible for the fact that we separated.

Q20  For me the message is that one should love and appreciate a person in a long-term relationship instead of worshipping that person.

It seems that because the story corresponded to his real life experience, it set him thinking about his former relationship and his own personality very closely. As a result the text seems to have taken on a deeper personal meaning as the wording "For me the message is..." suggests.

There are three aspects of this reader's interpretation that could be explained by the strong association to personal life. First, unlike the majority, he thinks that work is very important to the man. In questionnaire D he suggests that work is also very important to himself. It could be that his identification with the character has affected this conclusion. Second, his attitude towards the young man is more understanding than the attitude of many other readers. Yet, he recognises that "there is some rudeness and ruthlessness in him lurking behind a veil of good behavior" and dissociates this aspect from himself in questionnaire D: "I could not be demanding the way he is, not even as part of a game. I am totally disinterested in sadomasochism and other such things." Third, he finds it difficult to say what feelings the young girl evokes in him, and this could be due to mixed feelings about his ex-girlfriend. Otherwise, his interpretations were very similar to those of the other readers.

A few associations to personal life are also related to text A, and they seem to primarily affect the reader's attitude towards the characters. For example, one reader saw the story thus: "Some kind of sad story and brings bad memories into my mind. The story brings out many male characteristic things into my mind[sic]." Her view of Coutts was very negative and she also thought Coutts and Winifred were a total mismatch. As a contrast, the two other readers who associated personal memories with the story were
much more understanding towards Coutts and also thought he and Winifred could be a good match. For example:

[...]

Coutts seems to me a very realistically depicted person; very human in this pain. This seeking for a conscience-bothering, thrilling experience with the woman that really makes him informal and feeling alive doesn’t in my opinion show not as much his unability to be trusted in matters of love but more or less that he still lacks the strength to listen his own reactions and learn from them. [...] I guess we all have had such times—Coutts evokes these memories of early youth where deep passion, jealousy and egoism characterized all our feelings & interpretations of environment. That’s why I can sympathise him although I really do not admire him—he has lots to learn.

In addition, one reader identified with the young woman’s nervousness about her body in text C and it seems plausible that this identification contributed to her view that the character is "very charming". One of the readers who thinks work is important for all the male characters suggests that work is very important to him. Possibly this personal experience of the importance of work has influenced his understanding of the characters. Both of these examples were mentioned also in the section on opposing opinions on pages 104 and 99 respectively.

Some views related to the sexuality of the drill sergeant’s wife in text B are also very interesting for examining the role of associations to personal life. Five readers pointed out that the wife does not seem very sexual, but three suggested that she seems even more interested in sex, or at least physical contact, than the man. Two of the readers who thought the wife seeks physical contact suggest that she also fits the image of a perfectly "pure" asexual woman. For example, reader 22 thought that the wife "is not ashamed to approach her husband, sexuality is natural with the person one loves" but at the same time she is "like a little doll to whom it is difficult to immediately attach carnal desires". In each of the opposing camps, there was also one reader who connected the story with his or her own views or experiences.

Reader 2 concluded that due to the couple’s "decency" sex is not part of the marriage. In questionnaire D, he explains that according to his view "more shy men tend to think sex should not enter into the picture, that to think so is giving in to crude instincts. Relationships should be based on intellect and friendship", and suggests that he also
feels this way. Reader 29 thought that "[t]he wife does seem even more eager, wanting intimacy (252, 624-625 of... here) (253, 669-670 Now.. light) (253, 678-682 His ... away)."
She suggests that the wife's "softness and gentleness" remind her of her mother, and how shocked she was to discover at school "how babies are made" and that consequently the mother she had considered perfect is also "a sexual animal".

There seem to be at least four factors which are relevant for these interpretations. One important element is the ideal or stereotype of perfect well-bred wives as asexual. The other elements are references to the wife in the text, one's attentiveness to them, and personal associations (or psychological motivations). I think the references to the wife give very different impressions. Here are a few examples, which are presented in the order they appear in the text.

She with her soft, Southern voice, her small hands forever clasping a handkerchief. (241)
The drill sergeant's thoughts were still on her whose brown curls fell over the white collar of her summer dress. (242)
They stacked the dishes unwashed in the sink, for she had put her arms about his neck and whispered, 'Why should I waste one moment of the time I have you here when the days are so lonesome and endless.' (251)
His wife had come up beside him in the dark and slipped her arm about his waist. (253)

It seems the first two passages, particularly the expression "her small hands forever clasping a handkerchief" can easily be associated with the stereotype of a somewhat helpless, not too intelligent, very proper and thus asexual woman. Reader 20 who found the woman "too perfect to be burdened with anything as physical as sexuality" referred to the first two passages. However, when the woman appears in the story herself, new impressions arise. To me, her perceptiveness suggests intelligence and depth of character which contradict the first impression. I think the two latter quotations also suggest that she does seek physical contact with her husband, and does it quite naturally. Reader 29 refers to the last quotation, among others, when suggesting that the wife is even more eager than the husband to seek intimacy.
One explanation for the different conclusions could be that those readers who think the wife is not sexual have held onto the impression given by the first references to the wife throughout their reading experience. The belief that sex should not be a part of relationships seems to give reader 2 a personal motive to favour this first impression and possibly even ignore expressions that challenge this view. The answers of the other readers do not suggest any personal motive for viewing the wife as asexual. Possibly such a motive could be revealed with additional data, but an alternative explanation is that these readers have been less attentive to the subsequent descriptions of the wife.

The readers who have concluded that the wife seems even more eager to have sex seem to have paid more attention to the way in which the wife behaves with her husband. It seems plausible that reader 29 has been more sensitive to those cues of the text which undermine the first impression because she associates the text with her personal experience of discovering that the stereotypical image of the perfect mother as asexual is a delusion. Again, it is possible that the other readers who see the wife as sexual also have some psychological motivation for this conclusion. But, it also seems plausible to assume that they have been more attentive to expressions which suggest that the wife approaches her husband and are perhaps more critical of the stereotypical image of well-bred wives as asexual. Thus it seems that even when the reader associates personal experiences or beliefs with a text, these associations are one ingredient in a complex melange of impressions arising from expressions in the text, culturally shared notions such as stereotypes, an understanding of human behaviour and personal beliefs about the validity of stereotypes.

Thus, we have found a few cases where it seems plausible to assume that an association to personal life has influenced an interpretation. These associations seem to primarily influence the reader's attitude towards a character but they can also affect the reader's understanding of a related aspect of the text, for example, whether Coutts and Winifred are a good match or whether the sergeant's wife is sexual. However, spontaneous associations to personal life are rare. Possibly the readers have not
mentioned all the associations they have had, but it may also be that Bleich's method of collecting response statements has made them seem much more common than they are. Moreover, similar views are also expressed without any reference to personal experiences, and it seems they can quite plausibly be explained by textual features, a certain understanding of people or particular values. Therefore it seems that although associations to personal life can sometimes colour the readers interpretation, they are one only factor among many others.

When trying to assess the influence of personal concerns, the first question is: what counts as evidence of a personal concern? The most reliable one is that the reader indicates this in his or her answers. Another possibility is that one knows the individual very well beforehand. Third, consistent attention to some issue could be a sign of a personal concern. Fourth, one could take all unique observations as evidence of personal concerns. I will first present situations where evidence of the first three types supports the conclusion that a personal concern has affected the interpretation, and then consider the individual observations and explanations.

Three readers tend to use a certain type of interpretation and indicate that this issue is important to them also in real life. For example, two readers suggest that social questions are important to them. Both of them paid attention to the society in text B and explained aspects of the other two texts through social factors. Another reader saw all the male characters as protective, and his answers to questionnaire D suggest that he feels this way towards women in real life.

I know the author of only two sets of answers, but these two people I know very well. In the answers of one of these readers I noticed one very characteristic thing. This person generally pays a lot of attention to people's intelligence, and this applied also to the characters. This person's interpretations also emphasised the inequality between men and women, which is a concern to this person in real life. In the group of readers I do not know, one reader brought up the inequality between men and women so often that it seems gender issues are probably a concern for this reader also in real life.
In these cases it seems plausible to assume that the reader’s personal concerns have directed his or her attention. But, paradoxically the interpretations that can most plausibly be connected with personal concerns are not unique. There were also other readers who expressed similar views but were not as consistent in this. For example, some pointed out that Coutts is intelligent or the young man stupid but did not discuss the intelligence of the other characters. Some readers connected social factors with one text but not with the others. Should we just assume in Bleich's spirit that all the readers who express a particular view have similar concerns, even if they express the view only once and do not otherwise indicate in their answers that the issue is a concern to them? Although this is possible, the following considerations diminish the persuasiveness of this view.

First, one might point out that many of the explanations are culturally shared. For example, attributing phenomena to social causes is a rather common and conventional way of explaining a multitude of things. It does not seem sensible to assume that everyone who uses this type of explanation is personally concerned about society. Rather it seems these people are aware of a common way of explaining human behaviour.

Second, it would seem wise to grant the possibility that everything a reader says does not reflect his or her personal views. It seems plausible that through our knowledge of language and people, we have learnt to connect certain things with each other even if they are not a personal concern. For example, it seems that the cleaning woman’s reference to her low wages and her situation in text B can very easily be associated with social inequality. Likewise, Coutts’ manner of speaking and his interest in art can easily be associated with good education and intelligence. If one accepts the idea that the text can guide the readers, then it seems very likely it has done so in these and other similar cases. The readers assumptions of what I was interested may also have guided their attention. As the readers were told that I was interested in their views of men and women, they have probably concentrated on these issues in their answers. For example, all references to gender roles may not reflect the readers' personal concerns
but their understanding of my concerns. It is also possible that some readers have left out their views on some other aspects of the text because of this.

Third, there are also situations where a reader seems aware that his or her personal concern affects the interpretation and expresses some doubt about whether the conclusion is warranted. Here are two examples, which are both related to text B. One ponders on why the sergeant would like to have a boy and the second reflects upon the message in the text.

28FLi Maybe because if the child were a girl, she would have to face the same difficult circumstances as the cleaning woman has. Would like to interpret it so that it is harder to grow up as a girl, but this may be far-fetched.

8MO The author shows us decent people feeling confused and threatened by the abstractness and moral corruptness of modern society. To me, it seems like a subtle call for political and personal activism, showing people that they're not alone in longing for something less confused and dirty. But that's probably just me :-).

This awareness of the influence of one's personal concerns suggests that the readers are not blindly led by their concerns but can also be critical of the way in which their personal concerns influence their views.

In sum, because many of the explanations are culturally shared and it seems plausible that readers can recognise in texts thought models they do not subscribe to, the assumption that all the views the reader expresses are motivated by subjective concerns seems problematic. One can of course believe like Holland that even common ways of seeing the world are ultimately ways to fulfil the needs of individual identities. But, since the identities are constructs, it seems that with this approach a particular interpretation could also be explained in a multitude of ways.

Thus far, I have examined situations where the reader's statement that an issue is a concern to him or her or the reader's exceptionally consistent attention to an issue support the conclusion that the issue is a personal concern. But what about the many individual observations and explanations? Can we assume that they are also reflections of personal concerns or identity themes? Let us consider some examples. Here are some of the answers to the first question related to text B. The unique suggestions are highlighted in italics.
1 a) What do you think the drill sergeant is like? What emotions does he evoke in you?

1MO  He seems to be a person who either does not have a strong will, or perhaps he is just prone to be influenced by other people's views and manners (87-88). He is not sure about who he is (731). This is also reflected in the fact that he does not feel at home in his job (in the army 154-156, and with his wife 673-677, 750). He is a lucky guy who considers it a bit of a problem that he has been able to arrange his life in a way which is satisfactory to him, but is not satisfied with something, but he cannot seem to be able to point out to himself what it is. He is good-hearted and tied to his home-ground (695). He is also dreamy (217) and blue-eyed. He thinks a lot about the need for freedom, but does not actually seem to need freedom that much when it really comes to it (210-220).

4MLa  He is a kind man (262-264), who is concerned of what other people think of him (280-282). Having been in Memphis, he probably sees himself as a Southern gentleman and tries to behave accordingly (312-313). I sympathise with him, even like him, although I do not exactly identify with him.

8MO  He is a caring, tender man. He has had ideals when he was younger, but now he is wanting for a sense of purpose. There is a part of him that wants to sacrifice himself for a higher goal. He wishes his life was very different from what it is, but he feels trapped by his daily routine. The only part of his life that really makes sense to him is at home with his wife. He is vaguely troubled by a lack of coherence in his life. I feel strongly for him, and find myself wishing I could meet this man and talk to him, perhaps help him find ways of leading a more fulfilling and coherent life. His problem seems to be rooted in an inability to understand the way in which the different sides of his personality hang together.

20FO  He seems like a good, kind man, quite unlike the other soldiers. I have the impression that he is not a soldier by choice but because it is expected of him by the circumstances (wartime). He would prefer a quiet, peaceful life with his wife in a nice house. He does a lot of thinking and little talking.

24FO  He is a sensitive, pensive man but a man of honour in a very masculine, all-American Southern way. He is like Abraham Lincoln but Southern. Both sporty and pensive—all good manly qualities combined. He is almost like a stereotype, hero of an American war film, an Ernest Hemingway. Thus he doesn't have a name but is the drill sergeant with small initials.

27FLa  He seems calm, quiet or perhaps pensive is a better word. He is also kind and gentle. Order (working in the army), and aesthetic impressions (the flowers, the cleaning woman, and the table, lamp and ash tray) fascinate him. He seems quite nice, perhaps a bit too sissy for my taste and he is in the wrong field too (or the wrong place). But he is undoubtedly nice and seems trustworthy.

28FLi  He's a "nice guy". He loves his wife, treats her well, does his duty in the army and values family life. Still he finds himself thinking about the cleaning lady and her hands representing a different way of life, something and everything that's out there in the world. He seems like an interesting person.

29FO  He's a kind man (244, 262-264 the—again). He loves his wife very much but also likes the rough, even too honest soldiers, and even the odd girl who picked the sweet peas. The sergeant has acquired an idyll he has wanted and feels it threatened by the bitterness and wilderness of the world outside their pretty home. I sympathize with him quite a lot, though he doesn't appreciate his wife's psychological capacities enough to trust her with his feelings.

30FLa  He seems like a very decent kind of a man, friendly but a bit reserved, emotional but keeps most of his emotions to himself. I thought interesting the way he separated the two worlds in
his mind; the army world and the world with his wife, where he really belonged (204, 154-156). He seems to be closer to 30 than 20, judging from the way he has passed the rebelliousness of a young man and now looks forward to having a suburban home and a peaceful life (243, 208-219).

32FO He takes things seriously and isn't very happy with his life. He is fragile, but tries to be tough. I feel sympathy for him and would like to make him smile.

34FO I don't think he is a very extraordinary person so it's easy to relate to him. He values simple things and perhaps is different from usual literary characters in being so satisfied with his life. Of course this satisfaction seems to arise from somewhat traditional values and social systems as he seems to appreciate the fact that women are like this and that and that different social classes are clearly distinguished.

It would be tempting to assume that since these observations appear unique, they must somehow spring from the reader's unique personality, as Bleich and Holland might suggest. However, proving the matter is rather difficult. One can find a hint of a possible personal concern only for two of the views expressed above, and even in these cases the evidence is not particularly compelling. In both cases the reader has used a similar interpretation also elsewhere. Reader 1 thought that Coutts in text A also has a weak will and he indicated that he feels this applies to himself. But, since many readers considered Coutts weak, we could assume that this interpretation was the result of linguistic conventions and cultural norms of what accounts as strength of character rather than personal concerns. Reader 8 also used the idea of a divided personality to explain Coutts' problems. But, as he did not give any indication of how this idea might be related to himself, one would need to know the person better to decide whether this interpretation really reflects a personal concern or an identity.

A second point to note is that many of the unique observations fit at least my understanding of the text very well and seem to be in line also with the understanding of several other readers. Therefore I suspect that there may be many other readers who would agree with many of the highlighted views of readers 4, 8, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, for
example. If several readers agree on a point, then it seems the interpretation is primarily guided by shared knowledge of language and a common understanding of human behaviour rather than the reader's personality.

Some of the unique observations could also be due to differences in attentiveness, as Iser might suggest. For example, reader 20's conclusion that the events happen during wartime could well be explained by inattentiveness. The answers of readers 4 and 24 suggest that one's cultural knowledge can affect the issues one pays attention to. Both of these readers pay attention to the fact that the sergeant comes from a Southern state. In order to know how this might be relevant, one has to be familiar with the tradition of Southern gentlemen and belles. Since education affects the explanation models the reader is familiar with, his or her education can also affect the explanations the reader proposes. For example, one reader who has studied philosophy connects the following idea with text C: "As our interaction is kind of a game (Wittgenstein's language games) and its rules are seldomly explicated to every player, anything that transgresses the routine that has shown to be successful can develop to a catastrophe."

Hence, it seems plausible that some of the individual observations spring from personal concerns, but I would hesitate to conclude that all of them necessarily do. It seems differences in attentiveness, knowledge in a related field, education or understanding of human beings also guide our attention and influence the explanations we are likely to use. Moreover, when the observations seem to be in line with other views related to the text, it seems plausible that other readers would agree with them, and in such cases linguistic conventions and a shared understanding of human beings seem to have a more relevant role in the interpretation than the reader's personality.

29 As I noted in the section "Common interpretations", there are several ideas which are mentioned only by a few people in the free responses, but when asked to indicate how well the expression describes the character in questionnaire D, several readers consider it a good description. For example, five readers refer to Coutts' eloquence in their free responses, but eighteen readers consider him "verbally talented". This suggests that an impression can be shared by a much larger number of readers than the references in the free responses suggest.
Before we can conclude this section, we should also consider how personal concerns might influence the message the reader finds in the text. Usually when asked to indicate what they thought the author's message might have been, the readers mentioned a conclusion one could draw from one of the common ideas related to the text. One such example is the conclusion that, like Coutts in text A, many people have difficulty choosing between an ordinary safe option and a highly attractive but risky option. A few times the readers also suggested that they found it difficult to answer the question. In cases where the readers connected the text with personal experiences, it seems the reading experience became a process of re-examining that previous life experience, and forming a new conclusion of it (see for example the answers on page 16). I presume this corresponds to the kind of process Bleich thinks is involved in each reading experience. Hence the data suggest that when the text reminds the reader of a personal experience, the reader's views of this experience are intertwined with his or her view of the text. But as these clear cases are very rare, it is very difficult to say whether the readers' conclusions reflect personal concerns also in other cases. Often it seems they could simply be based on an understanding of the motivations another person could have for writing such a story.

To conclude this section, let us summarise the results. The data contain a few examples where associations to personal life seem to have influenced the interpretation. These personal associations seem to affect most clearly the reader's attitude towards the characters. It seems quite sensible that if a text reminds us of our personal experiences, our understanding of it will be coloured by the emotions and other views related to these experiences. A few examples also suggest that personal concerns can influence the interpretation particularly by directing the reader's attention to some aspect of the text. For example, a personal interest in social affairs could explain why some readers tend to pay attention to the story's society. It also seems plausible that some of the individual observations and explanations have a subjective motive.

However, situations where a reader mentions a personal association or where the data otherwise provides some evidence for a connection between a personal
concern and an interpretation are rare. Often similar interpretations are suggested also without any reference to personal life, and it seems many of the unique observations could be accepted also by other readers. Therefore the root of these interpretations is not necessarily a personal concern, but a similar understanding of language and people. It seems plausible that sometimes the thought models the readers recognise in the texts coincide with their concerns and sometimes they do not. Thus the personal concerns may simply be one additional factor that leads the reader to point out a particular aspect of a text. Other factors that may influence the issues a reader pays attention to or the explanations he or she proposes are the reader’s cultural knowledge, education and attentiveness.

2.5. Influence of gender and education

Although it has proven difficult to sort the readers into interpretive communities according to their interpretations, it seems sensible to examine whether one’s membership in a group of people that share some other characteristic is reflected in one’s responses. The participants in this study could be divided into such groups according to their gender and their literary education. I will first examine how the readers’ gender may have influenced their interpretations, and also suggest how an awareness of gender issues shows in the answers. I will then examine whether one’s educational background seems to affect the interpretations.

Bleich suggests in GI that male responses to prose are governed by the readers’ conception of the author, whereas female responses focus on relating emotions evoked by the characters to real life events or people (264). In the responses of my readers, I did not find any such clear differences in focus. Usually both men and women express similar views, and in the few cases where an idea is expressed only by members of one sex, the observation is usually made only by a few readers. However, it seems plausible that some of the differences in the proposed explanations are related to gender. The most interesting example is the fact that there were two instances where six women
but only one man suggested that the male character's actions were motivated by a fear of losing control.

In the first case, the female readers suggested that Coutts' relationship to his sexuality is governed by his fear of losing control of himself. The second instance was related to question C 13 which asked the readers to explain why it was horrifying for the young man in text C that the girl should cross the border to sexual lightheartedness so easily. Six female readers suggested that he is horrified because he can no longer control her. The most common explanation suggested by men was that he is terrified because he now needs to redefine his relationship to her (5 male readers). Two of the female readers were the same in both cases, the male reader was different in each case. Thus there were ten women and two men who proposed this kind of explanation.30

It seems there could be various possible reasons why women would be more likely to suggest that men want to control women's sexuality or are afraid of losing control of their own when faced with an attractive woman. One reason is that it is a classic feminist argument (e.g. Beauvoir 182), which many women have probably adopted. Another possibility is that women have personal experience of such control and are therefore more sensitive to pointing it out. Third, if indeed men have such fear of losing control, we might think that men have a psychological resistance to recognising such a motivation behind male actions.

However, in general both the male and female readers were rather gender conscious. Both men and women paid a lot of attention to the way male and female characters were described in the texts and criticised the inequality they found in the male-female relationships in the stories. As the responses of, for example, readers 8, 9 and 10 to text C suggest, men can be condemn male chauvinism in the texts just as fiercely as women (see pages 71 and 73). Probably one reason why the readers paid

30 If the answers to all other questions are also taken into account, the idea that the male protagonist wants to be in control is mentioned by three men and eleven women in relation to text A and four men and nine women in relation to text C. In total, six out of the eleven male participants connected this idea with either text. For women, the total number was fifteen out of sixteen. Hence it seems women tend to use this interpretation more than men, but it is in no way alien to men either.
attention to gender roles was that they knew I was interested in their views of men. But it also seemed that paying attention to such issues has become a habit for many readers before this survey; they were not just trying to make a good impression on me.

The readers' guesses on the sex of the author were also quite interesting from a gender point of view. In each case the majority of the readers thought the writer was male. For text A the number was 18, for text B 17 and for text C 15. The reader's view of the way the different sexes were described in the text was often cited as the main reason for the choice. For example, five readers thought that text A is written by a man because the focus is so clearly on the male character. Six readers concluded that the writer of text C is a woman because the young girl is described so well. The fact that text B describes army life led six readers to the conclusion that the writer must be male. Hence, it seems the readers tend to believe that men will have difficulty describing women well and vice versa. Apart from the young girl in text C, the readers also found the female characters rather stereotypical. Thus it seems their belief has some grounds at least in this collection of texts. However, because I personally thought the female characters were more than just stereotypes, I also wonder whether the rising in feminist awareness has made people quick to dismiss female characters as stereotypical.

Since ten out of the twenty-seven participants have studied either Finnish or a foreign language, the data offers an opportunity to examine how a linguistic training might affect interpretation. My overall impression was that both the readers who have a linguistic training and who do not were sensitive to nuances and made pertinent observations. However, the readers 4, 6, 26, 27 and 29 often seemed to tie together all the common ideas related to the question, and four of them have a linguistic training. This suggests that training can enhance one's ability to summarise the considerations relevant for a particular interpretation, but on the whole, there was no clear difference in the competence or the interpretations of the people who had a linguistic background and who did not.

All in all, it seems plausible that some differences in the way the readers saw a particular situation are explained by gender. Likewise, it seems plausible that training
has contributed to the ability to summarise the common ideas related to a question, which some individuals seem to have. However, in general, the interpretations did not seem to vary considerably according to the person's gender or training.

2.6. Summary of the empirical results

Let me then summarise the results. My first observation was that there are several ideas which appear in the answers of many readers. The common ideas are often closely related to each other and they appear in answers to many different questions. Many of them can be easily connected with certain passages in the text, and the readers' references to the text tend to concentrate on these passages. However, readers form similar views also of matters that are not clearly connected with any passage. When the similarity of the interpretations is examined on the level of questions, the strongest agreement is usually related to matters that are described in large parts of the text. Conversely, when an issue is mentioned only in passing or not discussed directly, there is more variety in the answers and the readers may also suggest that the scarcity of references makes it difficult to form an opinion.

The agreement varied also between the texts. The common ideas related to text A and C seem closely connected with each other and they centre on matters that are discussed in large parts of the text. The readers' views on text B were much more divided and the strongest agreement was related to details rather than central themes. One possible explanation for this difference is that text B seems to have more themes than the other two texts and it also contains many contradictory expressions. Hence, it seems that readers seek guidance from the text, and when the guidance diminishes due to the scarcity of references, contradictions or an abundance of themes, the variety in the interpretations increases. This suggests that Iser is correct in assuming that the text guides the readers and various textual features affect the determinacy of the text.

Sometimes the readers are also divided into two groups with opposing opinions. Opposing opinions are related to issues that are scarcely discussed in the text,
as well as matters that I thought could be interpreted in two ways. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these answers is that often the members of the opposing parties have paid attention to the same expressions, and one of the parties either acknowledges the opposing interpretation or incorporates it in its own view in a weaker form. This suggests that contrary to Fish's argument, the readers "produce" the same formal features and attach similar implications to them. Thus it seems that differences in the overall interpretations do not necessarily arise from "producing" the formal features differently, but from weighing the implications of some formal features differently against the impressions arising from other formal features.

In addition to common ideas, most answers also contain unique elements such as observations or explanations not mentioned by other readers. Most of these unique ideas are such that many other readers would probably agree with them. Situations where a reader suggests an interpretation that deviates considerably from the views expressed by other readers are rare. In a few cases, it seems plausible to assume that the exceptional view has a psychological motivation, as Holland suggests. A few examples also suggest that spontaneous associations to personal life can colour the reader's interpretation. Sometimes it seems a personal concern may have given the reader a subjective motivation for a particular interpretation, as Bleich argues. However, situations where the data provides some evidence to support the inferred connection between personal associations or concerns and an interpretation are rare. Moreover, similar views are often expressed also without any reference to either personal associations or concerns. One reason for this might be that the readers have not mentioned all of their associations or pointed out their concerns. But, it seems one could arrive at many of these conclusions only based on a common understanding of language and people. Therefore it is questionable whether subjective motivations or identity themes are the determining factor behind all interpretations as Bleich and Holland, respectively, suggest. It seems quite plausible that they form just one additional factor which occasionally tints one's interpretation in addition to one's knowledge of language and culture, one's education and one's attentiveness.
The interpretations did not vary much according to the readers' gender or education, but it is possible that some differences in focus are related to gender, and it seems plausible that linguistic training is one reason why four of the readers often seem able to summarise the common interpretations related to a question.

3. Possible criticism

Like any piece of research, this study has several points which could be criticised. I would here like to consider some of the most likely criticisms. Perhaps one of the first criticisms would be that the number of participants is too small to warrant any far-reaching conclusions. I believe that this number of responses is sufficient to show trends in the responses, but it would be interesting to investigate the matter further with additional data. It seems far-reaching conclusions have also been based on much smaller samples of responses, as in the case of Holland, Bleich and Fish, or no actual responses, as in the case of Iser.

One might also object that it is not very relevant that some five, ten or even twenty-five readers agree on a handful of points, if at the same time all of their responses contain unique elements as well. Does not this show that their reading experiences have been different? I believe we cannot know how different or similar their experiences have been apart from clearly opposing statements because no response statement records all elements that were part of the experience. It is very possible that if I presented the readers with a list of unique observations and asked them to tick those they agree with, many of them would not appear unique anymore. But this is not to say that all the uniqueness is illusory, I believe some of it would remain. The similarity is important because it presents a theoretical challenge. It needs to be explained somehow, and I think the only plausible explanation is that a shared understanding of language use and people leads readers to similar conclusions.

Bleich and Holland may also object that since I am not a psychologist, and my method of collecting data is completely different from theirs, I am in no position to
evaluate their theories. A broader knowledge of psychology would certainly have helped in evaluating their theories. Yet the main problems in their work are not related to psychology but to implausible notions of language.

As regards the method of collecting data, I believe none of us have yet used a method that would allow assessing the influence of personal concerns properly. The methods of Holland and Bleich with their extensive use of free association are bound to discover personal concerns and idiosyncrasies, but it remains unclear whether these associations would have been a part of the reading experience if the researcher did not primarily seek for them, and whether they actually had a determining role in the interpretation. Since I have not explicitly asked readers to consider the influence of their personal concerns or report all of their associations and emotions, it is possible that they are underrepresented in my data. I think the best compromise would be to ask readers first to record what caught their attention in the text and how they interpreted it. After that one could ask them why they think they paid attention to these aspects, and whether they have a personal significance.

Someone might also suggest that because I asked the readers to point out passages that their interpretations were based on, the study assumes that texts guide interpretation. Indeed, this is my assumption, and the only way to examine the validity of this assumption is to ask readers to suggest such connections and look at the outcome. I have tried to avoid influencing their choices by, for example, placing the questions with quotations in a different section and asking the readers not to look at these questions beforehand.

One might also criticise the way I have grouped the answers together or suggest that I might have misunderstood some answers. I believe that any system of grouping is always debatable. As each answer has a unique wording, which can be thought to reveal a different emphasis or attitude (if nothing else), any attempt to point out similarities in the answers is always open to the charge that one overlooks important differences. In this analysis, I have tried to group the answers in a way that brings out the similarity in them while also conscious of the unique elements in the answers. The main
questions I have asked while analysing the answers are: Is it likely that these readers would agree on this point if they were to discuss the matter? Does this unique element express a genuinely exceptional conclusion, or is it likely that other readers would accept this view? In this way I have tried to distinguish unique elements that deviate from commonly expressed ideas from unique elements that are in line with the common ideas and would most likely be accepted by many readers. This distinction often seems to be missing from analyses that emphasise the uniqueness of each answer. But, since no reader will record all the observations and conclusions he or she made while reading, it is important to consider the likelihood that an observation expressed by only one reader would be accepted by others as well. For example, question 5 in questionnaire D, which asked the readers to rate how well a given adjective describes the characters, revealed that in some cases the great majority of readers shared the same view although it was mentioned only by a few readers in the free responses.

The best way to examine whether other readers accept a particular suggestion would be to ask the readers directly. Therefore it would be good to collect the data in two phases in the future. Since this possibility was not included in the method of collecting data this time, I have had to rely on my understanding of how certain observations and conclusions are related to each other and what sort of reasoning leads to a particular conclusion. It is possible that sometimes I have misunderstood an answer or made the wrong inference. But, as this study concentrates on pointing out trends in the answers, I believe that even if I had occasionally misunderstood an interpretation, such misunderstandings would not invalidate the main conclusions.

The questions are also open to a number of criticisms. One might suggest, for example, that a questionnaire which asks the readers' opinions on various matters is likely to direct the readers' attention also to matters they did not think about spontaneously and in this way distort the impression of what matters the reader considered most important. From this point of view, the request to write an essay might seem a better solution. However, in essays people generally try to develop only a few points and I believe that usually one's understanding of a text is much broader than the
topics one is likely to discuss in an essay. Therefore I think that when one tries to find out how readers have understood a text it is better to ask them to comment on different aspects of it. When the questions progress from general to specific and free responses are used, the answers will still reveal points of particular emphasis for a given reader.

Another potential criticism is that certain aspects of the questions enhance the impression that a general understanding of people is particularly relevant for interpretation. Many questions ask the reader to explain why he or she thinks the character acts in a particular way, and one could suggest that these questions lead the reader to ponder on likely motivations for particular behaviour. I think it is possible that the questions have guided the readers in this way but I also believe the question "Why does character X do Y" is one of the most common questions literary interpretation typically seeks to answer.

One reader felt that some of the questions "forced one to invent and cook up far beyond what little was said in the texts". This view suggests that at least some of the answers to questions that addressed an issue which was not extensively discussed in the text, such as the character's attitude towards work or life, may have been "cooked up" to satisfy me although the reader did not really have a clear opinion about the matter. I asked these questions because I believe it is quite common for readers to form opinions also based on brief references or even no direct references to an issue, and I wanted to see whether these impressions would be similar or different. As the criticism of this reader suggests, such questions run the risk of being considered forced beyond the scope of the text. However, because our impression of a text often extends beyond what is explicitly stated, I think a few such questions are justified despite this risk. I also believe that most readers will indicate it if they find the question too difficult to answer, and indeed sometimes readers did point out that since the references are scarce, they do not have a clear opinion of the matter.

Finally, I would like to make three brief observations. Generally the readers did not find the survey biased, but in hindsight I realise that my selection of the texts and the questions was influenced by topics that feminists have brought up, such as
aggression against women. Several readers also pointed out that it is very difficult to estimate how many of the people one knows have the same characteristic as a character. I think this is an interesting finding in itself, but it is perhaps best to omit such questions in the future. Many readers also felt that the survey required a lot of work and time. I think this implies that the readers who did complete it were very motivated, but it would be good to try to make the surveys less demanding in the future.

In sum, in order to further investigate the role of personal associations and concerns in interpretation and to see whether unique observations in fact are unique, we need supplementary data. These issues could be examined with, for example, the following kind of survey. First one could ask readers to record the issues that caught their attention while reading as well as their thoughts, associations and emotions related to the reading experience. One could also ask a very general question about the text such as "What was this story about?" One could then ask the readers to examine why they paid attention to these particular issues and indicate if they are related to personal experiences or interests. Next, one could ask more specific questions about different aspects of the text, which would give an understanding of how the readers have interpreted aspects that have not necessarily been the centre of their attention. After a preliminary analysis of the answers, one could ask readers to indicate whether they agree with various unique and common suggestions of other readers. Finally, one could discuss the interpretations either in a group or individually with the readers.

This combination of data would allow both personal and communal factors to surface and would therefore give good grounds for examining the role of each factor. The first part of this data would suggest how frequent associations to personal life are and whether readers can usually establish a connection between their personal concerns and the matters they pay attention to. The latter parts would help to examine whether the personal focus also dominates the reader's views of other aspects of the text, and show whether unique observations or ideas mentioned only by a few readers would be accepted also by other readers. By choosing participants with different cultural backgrounds, one could also see how cultural factors influence interpretation.
4. Conclusion

In the preceding pages I have suggested two things. My first argument has been that the theories of Holland, Bleich, Iser and Fish contain some implausible assumptions related to language. The second argument has been that the readers tend to understand many aspects of the texts in the same way, which also undermines some of the assumptions of our theorists.

The most problematic aspect of the theories of Bleich and Holland is the reasoning related to the idea that people have idiosyncratic language systems or that words have a different meaning for different people. Both theorists seem to have forgotten two basic observations made by Wittgenstein: that words typically have many uses, and our understanding of words rests on the common practises of using them. When Holland argues that the rules of language are shared but their application varies, he fails to see that the whole point of a rule is the common practise of following it. Without such a common practise, people cannot communicate with words. When Bleich claims that we need to know the private etymologies of a person's vocabulary in order to understand the person, he forgets that these private etymologies can only be explained with words, and our hearers can understand our words only if we share an understanding of what words can mean. There may be some variation in the number of common uses of a word a person has learnt, but these will affect the person's understanding only when the person is not familiar with the use to which the word is put in a given context.

The main problem in Fish's argumentation is that he connects understanding with agreement and the interpretive strategies with lack of choice. Therefore Fish seems to be arguing that because person A holds a specific set of assumptions to be true, A inevitably understands words in a particular way. Person B can understand person A's interpretation only if B also holds the same set of assumptions to be true and thus agrees with the interpretation. But, people can understand another person's views even if they do not agree with them. Hence, Fish's suggestion that communication is based on a
shared way of thinking can be sensible only if this shared way of thinking is conceived in the Wittgensteinian sense as a shared understanding of the various uses words can have as part of human activities. However, if the shared way of thinking is understood in this broad sense, it will always leave room for various possibilities and thus also for various choices. Moreover, understanding an interpretation does not require that one agrees with it, i.e. considers it plausible or true, only that one is familiar with the particular use of the words.

Iser runs into difficulties because he assumes that the meaning of a word is something separate from the word that is grasped through forming images. The problem with this assumption becomes clear if we ask how we can know that the image we may form when reading the word "red" is an image of red. As Wittgenstein suggests, we can know that our private image represents red only because we know public samples of red. In other words, we know the public standards of correctness (rules) for using the word "red". The meaning of a word is not some mental entity separate from the word; meaning is the use of the word. The guiding effect of a text does not rest on thinking the author's thoughts or the capacity of words to project themselves into the reader's mind, but the shared practises of using words.

My analysis of the readers' responses has given rise to the following conclusions. First, the readers seem to have understood many aspects of the texts in the same way, and situations where one reader forms a clearly deviant view are rare. Often the common views can be connected with particular passages in the text, and the readers' references to the text concentrate on these passages. Aspects that are discussed in large parts of the text are usually understood similarly. The level of agreement in the answers decreases when readers discuss issues that are mentioned only in passing or not discussed directly in the texts. Sometimes the readers also suggest that the scarcity of references to an issue makes it difficult to form an opinion of it. All of these matters suggest that readers seek guidance from the text for their views. Thus they seem to support Iser's assumption that the text can guide the readers, and that the composition of the text can either enhance or decrease this guiding effect.
Second, there is also some evidence that associations to personal life or personal concerns have affected the interpretation, as Bleich suggests. In a few cases it also seems plausible that the psychological defence strategies Holland talks about may have influenced an interpretation. But, situations where one can plausibly suggest a connection between a personal association, a personal concern or a psychological motivation and an interpretation are rare. Often interpretations that can be connected with a personal association or concern have been presented also without any reference to personal matters. One reason for this could be that the readers have not expressed all of their personal associations and concerns. However, usually it is easy to agree with these interpretations, and one would expect many other people to agree with them as well. The same applies also to the individual observations and explanations that often accompany common interpretations. Therefore it seems that subjective motivations or associations to personal life may be just one additional factor that occasionally colours the reader's views. We can of course assume that an interpretation always has a subjective motivation, as Bleich argues, or fulfils the need of one's identity, as Holland claims. But, in most cases one could just as well assume that the reader has simply followed common conventions. Situations where it is difficult to understand an interpretation without assuming that it has a subjective psychological motivation are rare.

Third, the opposing opinions suggest that members of both parties pay attention to the same textual features. Often the members of one party also acknowledge the opposing interpretation or incorporate it in their view in a milder form. This suggests that readers consider the same features relevant for assessing a particular aspect of a text and also attach similar implications to these features. Therefore Fish seems to be misguided in arguing that members of opposing parties produce different formal features, or could not choose another interpretation. It seems rather that they produce the same formal features but weigh the implications of various aspects of the text differently, and therefore choose a different interpretation. The fact that most answers combine common interpretations and individual observations also shows that the concept of an interpretive community as those who agree is not very useful.
Perhaps the main conclusion one may draw from these observations is that since literature is a form of language use, any theories that try to explain how readers understand literature should begin with an examination of the principles that govern language use in general. I believe Wittgenstein's rigorous analysis of various assumptions related to language provides a good foundation also for examining literary response. Wittgenstein does not offer us one principle that would explain each particular interpretation, but he provides a framework that makes both the similarity and variety in interpretations intelligible. He offers a way of explaining how our understanding is related to the signs we are presented with and thus also outlines the factors that can cause differences in understanding.

In Wittgenstein's view language use is an activity governed by public rules which people learn through training. The meaning of a sign is its use, and our understanding of signs rests on the common practises of using them. Understanding language is tied with our general understanding of people. However, as words often have many different uses and it is possible to breach the common rules, people can understand words in different ways.

Thus, when readers present an interpretation that reflects common uses of signs and common ways of explaining human behaviour, we can assume that these conventions are the primary reason for their views. If one so desires, one can assume that they also reflect subjective motivations, though it may prove difficult to show what exactly such motivations are. When readers present different views, the first question to ask is: are they following a different convention or going against conventions? We then have to resort to our understanding of people in order to decide what is the most plausible explanation in each case. Sometimes the reader may not know a convention, or has not paid attention to some other aspect of a text. Sometimes readers may have a different understanding of people due to their cultural background, education or personal experiences. Occasionally they may also have a psychological motivation to view the text in a particular way. This approach acknowledges that many different factors contribute to
our understanding of a text, and it gives us the freedom to choose the most plausible ones for each case.

The idea that our understanding of language is connected with our understanding of people also ties in with two literary debates. One concentrates on the question whether we can correctly infer what a writer meant. Another question is the extent to which we can understand texts that describe another cultural reality. Since the readers in this study tended to understand the texts in the same way, it seems the text can guide their conclusions. It would be intriguing to explore the limits of this guiding effect with the help of living authors and readers from different cultural backgrounds in order to see whether readers actually can comprehend a text in the same way as the author, and whether this understanding can transcend cultural boundaries.
Appendix A. Instructions for the survey

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SURVEY

This survey aims at collecting information about the way you interpret literary texts and the way you view men. It consists of three short stories and related questions.

From the point of view of interpretation, I am particularly interested in your ability to identify textual elements that your interpretation is based on. For example, if some lines in the text give you the impression that a character is tired, please refer to that passage in your answer when you explain that you think the character is tired. Line numbers have been added to the texts to make it easier for you to refer to a passage. You can give the reference in the form: text label, page number, line numbers “first word ... last word of passage”. I do not expect you to give passage references in all your answers but when you start answering a question, please ask yourself what in the text gave you the impression you are about to write down and if some passage comes clearly to your mind, please give the reference in your answer. Try to give at least 3-5 references in each of the questionnaires A, B and C, and the more you can find, the better.

It is very important that you keep in mind that the texts are not assumed to be an all-encompassing representation of manhood and should be taken simply as a starting point for discussion. They are an invitation to you to express your agreement or disagreement and your understanding of the way things are. You are also most welcome to discuss any relevant issues that go beyond the scope of the texts or the questions as long as you also answer the questions presented to you.

All the answers will be handled confidentially to the degree that I myself do not want to know whose a particular set of answers is. Therefore, do not write your name on the questionnaires and hand them to me enclosed in the envelope that is provided for this purpose. You can also get the questions on diskette. All this is to ensure that you can safely be completely honest in your answers and my interpretation will not be influenced by other knowledge I may have of you.

The survey kit should contain these instructions, three texts labelled A, B and C, three corresponding questionnaires labelled A, B, and C, a fourth questionnaire labelled D, and an envelope for returning the answers in. Before you start, make sure you have all these components.

The order in which you should complete the survey is reading text A, filling questionnaire A, reading text B, filling questionnaire B, reading text C, filling questionnaire C and in the end filling questionnaire D. Please do not read the texts in any other order. You should also answer the questions in the order they are presented to you. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you do not look at the questions in SECTION B of the questionnaires beforehand. The reason for this is that these questions may influence your interpretation, and because it is YOUR personal views that I am interested in, this would be an unrecoverable loss. For the same reason I hope that if you change your mind about some issue after you have written your answer, please do not go back and change it, but write a comment after your answer indicating why you changed your mind and how. The only exception to the rule of answering the questions in the order they are presented are instances where some question raises others in your mind and you would like to spend some time thinking about them. In such cases you are most welcome to skip to the other questions before answering that particular one, but please make sure you do not forget to answer it!

You can divide the survey among several days within two weeks. The recommendation is that you complete the survey within five days of starting it, but if this creates problems, you may extend the time. It is more important that you have enough time to concentrate on the survey than that you complete it in five days. However, it is very important that you remember all the texts clearly when you start filling questionnaire D because this questionnaire contains crucial questions related to all the texts. You should also complete the questionnaire related to a particular text on the same day as you have read the text.

In order to direct your interpretation as little as possible, the questionnaires are structured in such a way that depending on your answers some questions may overlap. (Sections a and b of questions 1 and 5 in questionnaires A and B are likely to overlap partly always.) In such cases you can refer back to your previous answer by giving the
questionnaire label and the number of the question but please check that your previous answer does completely cover the area that the new question addresses.

Please do not discuss the questions with anyone even if you feel tempted to ask your partner’s or friend’s opinion. Your partners and friends are most welcome to contribute their insights by doing the survey themselves but it is important that I get each individual’s opinions separately.

The questionnaires may contain questions for which the text does not offer clear-cut answers, so don’t be discouraged if you find some questions difficult. There are no correct or incorrect answers to any of these questions - it is your views that I am interested in.

Finally, a few practical instructions:
Please make yourself comfortable when you start doing the survey and make sure you are not pressed for time. You may read the texts as many times as you like.
Please note that the questionnaires are deliberately not customised for male and female participants, which means that you are expected to answer all the questions. If you are asked about how you would have done in a particular situation, the idea is that you put yourself in the character’s position whatever sex it happens to be.
Please fill the questionnaires with a permanent ink pen and make sure your handwriting is tidy enough to allow me to understand it.
If you need more space, use the reverse side or attach extra sheets.
The preferred language for answering the questions is English but if you would rather use Finnish, please feel free to do so.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey, I hope you will enjoy it!
Appendix B. Questionnaire A

QUESTIONNAIRE A

1 a) What do you think Coutts is like? What emotions does he evoke in you?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

1 b) Please list as many characteristic traits in Coutts as you can think of and indicate how common they are in men you know by circling the number corresponding to your choice. The scale is:

0: no men I know have this characteristic
1: 1 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
2: 2 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
3: 3 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
4: 4 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
5: all men I know have this characteristic

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1 c) Which of the characteristics listed in 1 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)
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2) How would you describe Coutts’ relationships to other people? Why are they such as you’ve described?
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3 a) Please list things that Coutts values in life and indicate how common these values or likings are among men you know by circling the number corresponding to your choice. The scale is:

0: no men I know value this thing
1: 1 out of 5 men I know value this thing
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5: all men I know value this thing

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3 b) Which of the things listed in 3 a) above do you value yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

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4) What does work mean to Coutts?

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5 a) What are Laura, Constance and Winifred like? What emotions do they evoke in you?

Laura________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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Constance____________________________________________________________________
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Winifred_____________________________________________________________________
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5 b) Please list the characteristics of Laura, Winifred and Constance and indicate how common they are among women you know by circling the number corresponding to your choice. The scale is:

0: no women I know have this characteristic
1: 1 out of 5 women I know have this characteristic
2: 2 out of 5 women I know have this characteristic
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5 c) Which of the characteristics listed in 5 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

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6) How would you describe Coutts’ attitude towards women and his relationships to Winifred and Constance? Why are they such as you’ve described?

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7) What is Coutts’ relationship to his own sexuality and Winifred’s sexuality? Why is it such as you’ve described?

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8) What is Coutts’ attitude towards life? Why is it such as you’ve described?

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SECTION B

The following section contains some excerpts of the text and related questions. The page and line reference is given after the quote. Please locate the quote in the text and remind yourself of the context in which it appears before answering the question. Whenever it is possible, give references to other passages in the text that your judgement is based on.

9) “Coutts felt a vague fear of Winifred. She was intense and unnatural - and he became unnatural and intense, beside her.” (p. 102, lines 487-489)

What are the meanings of the words intense and unnatural in this quote? Why does Coutts feel this way?
_____________________________________________________________________________
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10) “He hated it that she could not bear outspokenness.” (p. 97, line 320)

Do you agree with Coutts’ judgement of Winifred? Please explain why.
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11) “I do like life. But now I should like to be nailed to something, if it were only a cross.” (p. 97, lines 334-335)

Why does Coutts feel this way?
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_____________________________________________________________________________

12) “You know, Winifred, we should only drive each other into insanity, you and I: become abnormal.” (p. 104, lines 568-569)

“Yes,’ she said at length: ‘if we were linked together we should only destroy each other.” (p. 105, lines 628-629)

Why are Coutts and Winifred so sure that they are an impossible match? Do you agree with them?
_____________________________________________________________________________
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13) “The sense of freedom, of intimacy, was very fascinating. As he washed, the little everyday action of twining his hands in the lather set him suddenly considering his other love. At her house he was always polite and formal; gentlemanly, in short. With Connie he felt the old, manly superiority; he was the knight, strong and tender, she was the beautiful maiden with a touch of God on her brow. He kissed her, he softened and selected his speech for her, he forbore from being the greater part of himself. She was his betrothed, his wife, his queen, whom he loved to idealize, and for whom he carefully modified himself. She should rule him later on - that part of him which was hers. But he loved her, too, with a pitting, tender love. He thought of her tears upon her pillow in the northern Rectory, and he bit his lip, held his breath under the strain of the situation. Vaguely he knew she would bore him. And Winifred fascinated him. He and she really played with fire. In her house, he was roused and keen. But she was not, and never could be, frank. So he was not frank, even to himself. Saying nothing, betraying nothing, immediately they were together they began the same game. Each shuddered, each defenceless and exposed, hated the other by turns. Yet they came together again.” (p. 101-102, lines 464-487)

Please indicate whether you have ever felt the same way as Coutts. If you disagree with my interpretations of the ideas expressed in the quote above, please feel free to indicate this.

a) Have you ever felt the “old manly superiority” in the presence of a woman or felt that a man felt this way towards you? □ yes □ no
b) Have you ever wanted to be a knight for a woman or wanted your partner to be your knight? □ yes □ no
c) Have you ever felt that you forbore from being the greater part of yourself in the presence of your partner? □ yes □ no
d) Have you ever felt you want to idealize your partner? □ yes □ no
e) Have you ever thought that your partner should rule over you? □ yes □ no
f) Have you ever felt a pitting love towards your partner? □ yes □ no
g) Have you ever felt that your partner would bore you in the long run? □ yes □ no
h) Have you ever felt you weren’t being frank about your feelings towards two people you were attracted to (or loved)? □ yes □ no
i) Have you ever felt your relationship was a game in which both suffered but neither could keep away from the other? □ yes □ no

J) What causes feelings such as the ones listed above? (Please indicate which feeling you are referring to by using the labels a, b, c etc.)

K) Do you think such feelings are common among men you know? Why? (Please indicate which feeling you are referring to by using the labels a), b) c) etc.)
14) “In another instant he was gone, running with burning-red hands held out blindly, down the street.” (p. 108, lines 732-733)

Do you sympathise with Coutts? How would you have chosen if you had been in a similar situation?

_____________________________________________________________________________
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15) Please name the passage which you think is the most important in the text and briefly explain why it is so essential.

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SECTION C

16) Do you think Coutts, Laura and Winifred and the events described in the story are realistic? Please explain why.

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17) Do you think the story was written by a man or a woman? Why? If you recognised the author, please indicate who it is.

_____________________________________________________________________________
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18) What emotions did the story evoke in you? Did you like/dislike it?

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19) What do you think is the author’s message in this story, if any?

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Appendix C. Questionnaire B

QUESTIONNAIRE B

[Note: Original layout was similar to questionnaire A, the layout here has been changed to save space.]

1 a) What do you think the drill sergeant is like? What emotions does he evoke in you?

1 b) Please list as many characteristic traits in the drill sergeant as you can think of and indicate how common they are in men you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

0: no men I know have this characteristic
1: 1 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
2: 2 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
3: 3 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
4: 4 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic
5: all men I know have this characteristic

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1 c) Which of the characteristics listed in 1 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

2) How would you describe the drill sergeant’s relationships to other people? Why are they such as you’ve described?

3 a) Please list things that the drill sergeant values in life and indicate how common these values or likings are among men you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

0: no men I know value this thing
1: 1 out of 5 men I know value this thing
2: 2 out of 5 men I know value this thing
3: 3 out of 5 men I know value this thing
4: 4 out of 5 men I know value this thing
5: all men I know value this thing

Valued thing:

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3 b) Which of the things listed in 3 a) above do you value yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

4) What does work mean to the drill sergeant?

5) What is the cleaning woman and the drill sergeant’s wife like? What emotions do they evoke in you?

The cleaning woman:

The wife:

5 b) Please list the characteristics of the cleaning woman and the wife and indicate how common they are among women you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

0: no women I know have this characteristic
1: 1 out of 5 women I know have this characteristic
2: 2 out of 5 women I know have this characteristic
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5 c) Which of the characteristics listed in 5 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

6) How would you describe the drill sergeant’s attitude towards women and his relationship with his wife? Why are they such as you’ve described?

7) What is the drill sergeant’s relationship to his own sexuality and his wife’s sexuality? Why is it such as you’ve described?

8) What is the drill sergeant’s attitude towards life? Why is it such as you’ve described?

SECTION B

The following section contains some excerpts of the text and related questions. The page and line reference is given after the quote. Please locate the quote in the text and remind yourself of the context in which it appears before answering the question. Whenever it is possible, give references to other passages in the text that your judgement is based on.

9) “When he reached the stoop before the entrance to the barrack he lingered by the bulletin board.” (p. 238, lines 32-33)
Why does the drill sergeant act like this? What does this line tell you about him?
10) “This was his second year in the Army and now he found himself continually surprised at the small effect that the stream of words of the soldiers had upon him.” (p. 239, line 76-78)
What is the effect the words have upon him? Why does he feel this way?

11) “Suddenly he hoped his first child would be a boy.” (p. 247, lines 368-369)
Why does this thought come to his mind?

12) “How unreal to him were these soldiers and their hairy bodies and their talk and their rough ways. How temporary. How different from his own life, his real life with her.” (p. 241, lines 154-156)
“And the happiness and completeness of his marriage could not seem so large a thing.” (p. 255, lines 731-733)
A) Why would he come to think of the “hairy bodies”?

B) Where does the attitude towards his peers spring from? Do you think this attitude towards other men is common amongst men you know?

C) The first and second quote seem to contrast each other. What causes this contrast in the drill sergeant’s life? Do you think such feelings are common amongst men you know? Have you ever felt in a similar way?

13) “Before he went to the Army, had there not been moments when the thought of limiting himself to a genteel suburban life seemed intolerable by its restrictions and confinement?” (p. 243, lines 210-211)
Do you think such thoughts are common amongst men you know? Why have the drill sergeant’s thoughts changed (or have they changed)?

14) “If he and she had been living in those days he would have seen ever so clearly the Cause for that fighting. And this battlefield would not be abstract. He would have stood here holding back the enemy from the very land which was his own, from the house in which she awaited him.” (p. 254, lines 692-697)
What do these lines tell you about the drill sergeant’s character? Do you think these lines express a common motivation for going to war in men’s minds or are there other reasons that are more important?

15) “For a moment the drill sergeant was again overwhelmed by his wife’s perception and understanding. He would tell her everything he had on his mind. What great fortune it was to have a wife who could understand and to have her here beside him to hear and comprehend everything that was in his heart and mind. But [...]” (p. 254, lines 713-718)  “I guess I was thinking of how nicely you had arranged the things on the living-room table.” “Oh,” she said, for by his words I guess it was apparent that she felt him minimizing the importance of his own impressions this evening and of their closeness.” (p. 255, lines 735-739)
Why doesn’t the drill sergeant tell his wife about his impressions even though he thinks she would understand and realises that holding back makes her feel that he is minimizing the importance of their closeness? How would you have acted in a similar situation?

16) What is the function of the cleaning woman in the story? Why do you think the author decided to put the encounter with her in the story?

17) Please name the passage which you think is the most important in the text and briefly explain why it is so essential.

SECTION C

18) Do you think the drill sergeant and his wife are realistic? Please explain why.

19) Do you think the story was written by a man or a woman? Why? If you recognised the author, please indicate who it is.

20) What emotions did the story evoke in you? Did you like/dislike it?
21) What do you think is the author’s message in this story, if any?
Appendix D. Questionnaire C

QUESTIONNAIRE C

[Note: Original layout was similar to questionnaire A, the layout here has been changed to save space.]

1 a) What do you think the young man is like? What emotions does he evoke in you?

1 b) Please list as many characteristic traits in the young man as you can think of and indicate how common they are in men you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

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1: 1 out of 5 men I know have this characteristic trait
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1 c) Which of the traits listed in 1 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

2 a) Please list things that the young man values in life and indicate how common these values or likings are among men you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

0: no men I know value this thing
1: 1 out of 5 men I know value this thing
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2 b) Which of the things listed in 2 a) above do you value yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)
3) What does work mean to the young man?

4 a) What is the young woman like? What emotions does she evoke in you?

4 b) Please list the characteristics of the young woman and indicate how common they are among women you know by typing the number corresponding to your choice in the final column. The scale is:

0: no women I know have this characteristic
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4 c) Which of the characteristics listed in 4 b) above do you have yourself? (You may refer to them just by giving the line number.)

5) How would you describe the young man’s attitude towards women and his relationship with the young woman? Why are they such as you’ve described?

6) What is the young man’s relationship to his own sexuality and the young woman’s sexuality like? Why is it such as you’ve described?

7) What is the young man’s attitude towards life? Why is it such as you’ve described?

SECTION B

The following section contains some excerpts of the text and related questions. The page and line reference is given after the quote. Please locate the quote in the text and remind yourself of the context in which it appears before answering the question. Whenever it is possible, give references to other passages in the text that your judgement is based on.

8) “But he had never resembled a heartless tough guy, because he had never demonstrated either a particularly strong will or ruthlessness. However, if he did not resemble such a man, nonetheless he had longed to at one time.” (p. 10, lines 227-231)

What in this character’s nature makes him want to be a tough guy? Do you think men you know have felt the same way? Have you ever wanted to be “tough” yourself? Why/why not?

9) “Childish desires withstand all the snares of the adult mind and often survive into ripe old age.” (p. 10, lines 232-233)

What does the word childish refer to in this context? Is the desire actually “childish”?

10) “He had become reconciled to all this, yet all the same from time to time the terrible thought of the straight road would overcome him - a road along which he was being pursued, where he was visible to everyone, and from which he could not turn aside.” (p. 11, lines 265-269)

What do these lines tell you about the character? Do you think such feelings are common among the men you know? Have you ever felt the same way yourself? Why?
11) “There was nothing the young man missed in his life more than lightheartedness.” (p. 11, lines 248-249)
She wanted him to be completely hers and she to be completely his, but it often seemed to her that the more she tried to give him everything, the more she denied him something: the very thing that a light and superficial love or a flirtation gives to a person. It worried her that she was not able to combine seriousness with lightheartedness. (p. 5, lines 94-99)
If the young man misses lightheartedness as he claims, why has he started a relationship with a girl who thinks she lacks this quality?

12) “The alien quality of her soul drew attention to her body, yes, as a matter of fact it turned her body into a body for him as if until now it had existed for the young man hidden within clouds of compassion, tenderness, concern, love, and emotion, as if it had been lost in these clouds (yes, as if this body had been lost!)” (p. 16, lines 420-425)

What do you think of this view that tender emotions will make the “body” more distant? Do you think the young man is discovering a universal truth that applies to all people, or does the attitude spring from his character? If you think it springs from his character, what are the characteristics that make him feel this way? Have you yourself ever felt that the tender emotions towards somebody have decreased your physical attraction to them?

13) “It had always seemed to him that her inward nature was real only within the bounds of fidelity and purity, and that beyond these bounds it simply didn’t exist. [...] When he saw her crossing this horrifying boundary with nonchalant elegance, he was filled with anger.” (p. 19, lines 487-493)

What gives rise to such thinking? Why is the boundary “horrifying”? Do you think such feelings and thoughts are common among men you know? Have you ever felt in a similar way yourself?

14) “He looked at her and tried to discover behind her lascivious expression the familiar features which he loved tenderly. It was as if he were looking at two images through the same lens, at two images superimposed one upon the other with the one showing through the other. These two images showing through each other were telling him that everything was in the girl, that her soul was terrifyingly amorphous, that it held faithfulness and unfaithfulness, treachery and innocence, flirtatiousness and chastity. This disorderly jumble seemed disgusting to him, like the variety to be found in a pile of garbage. Both images continued to show through each other and the young man understood that the girl differed only on the surface from other women, but deep down was the same as they: full of all possible thoughts, feelings, and vices, which justified all his secret misgivings and fits of jealousy. [...] the real girl now standing in front of him was hopelessly alien, hopelessly ambiguous. He hated her. (p. 21, lines 548-569) [...] He longed to humiliate her. (p. 22, line 576)

A) Why should it be “terrifying” and “disgusting” that the girl is “hopelessly ambiguous”? Do you think these lines contain a good description of the causes of violent impulses towards women or are they just a manifestation of the character’s special psychological build-up? What other reasons for violent behaviour towards women can you think of?

B) Do you think such feelings arise sometimes in the minds of people when they are with their partners? Have you ever felt in a similar way towards your partner (or been the object of such emotions)? Why do you think this is the case?

15) “Perhaps the girl supposed that by means of the game she was disowning herself, but wasn’t it the other way around? Wasn’t she becoming herself only through the game?” (p. 16, lines 411-413)
What do you think? What is the girl’s real nature?

16) Please name the passage which you think is the most important in the text and briefly explain why it is so essential.

SECTION C

17) Do you think the characters and the events of this story are realistic? Please explain why.
18) Do you think the story was written by a man or a woman? Why? If you recognised the author, please indicate who it is.
19) What emotions did the story evoke in you? Did you like/dislike it?
20) What do you think is the author’s message in this story, if any?

Appendix E. Questionnaire D

QUESTIONNAIRE D

[Note: Original layout was similar to questionnaire A, the layout here has been changed to save space.]

SECTION A

The questions in this section are closely related to questions 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 of questionnaires A and B (questions 3, 5, 6 and 7 in questionnaire C) and give a crucial background to those questions. Before you start answering a question in this section, remind yourself of your answers to the corresponding question in the previous questionnaires. Please comment on all the texts in each answer and state clearly which ideas in your previous answers or in the texts you are referring to.

1 a) In what ways are Coutts’ and the drill sergeant’s relationships to other people similar to or unlike the relationships of men you know? (Corresponding question: 2)

1 b) In what ways are their relationships similar to or unlike your own relationships?

2 a) In what ways are Coutts’, the drill sergeant’s and the young man’s attitudes towards work similar to or unlike the attitudes of men you know? (Corresponding question: A&B 4, C 3)

2 b) In what ways are their attitudes similar to or unlike your own attitude towards work?

3 a) In what ways are Coutts’, the drill sergeant’s and the young man’s attitudes towards women and their relationships with women similar to or unlike the attitudes and relationships of men you know? (Corresponding question: 6/5)

3 b) Have you ever had similar relationships or thoughts? If so, what was their cause?

4 a) In what ways are the attitudes towards sexuality portrayed by Coutts, the drill sergeant and the young man similar to or unlike the attitudes of men you know? (Corresponding question: 7/6)

4 b) In what ways are the attitudes towards sexuality expressed in these stories similar to or unlike your own attitude towards sexuality?

5 a) In what ways are the attitudes towards life expressed by Coutts, the drill sergeant and the young man similar to or unlike the attitudes of men you know? (Corresponding question: 8/7)

5 b) In what way are these attitudes similar to or unlike your own attitude towards life?

SECTION B

1) If you had to choose among the principal male characters, which one would you like to be? Why?

2) If you had to choose a partner among the principal male characters, which one would you choose? Why?

A Coutts
B the drill sergeant
C the young man

A Coutts
B the drill sergeant
C the young man
3) If you had to choose among the principal female characters, which one would you like to be? Why?

A Constance
B Winifred
C the drill sergeant’s wife
D the young woman

4) If you had to choose a partner among the principal female characters, which one would you choose? Why?

A Constance
B Winifred
C the drill sergeant’s wife
D the young woman

5) Please indicate how well the following adjectives describe the principal male characters. Type the numbers corresponding to your choice in the appropriate columns. The scale is from 1 to 4 as follows:

1: not at all
2: somewhat
3: rather well
4: very well

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<thead>
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<th>Adjective</th>
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<th>young man</th>
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<td>weak (psychologically)</td>
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6) Do you think the principal male characters, i.e. Coutts, the drill sergeant and the young man, are exceptional or representative of many a Matti Meikäläinen? Why? (Please make sure you distinguish between the characters if you have different opinions of them.)

7) Please name any major issues in men’s lives that were not touched upon in these stories.

8) Please name any common characteristics of men that Coutts, the drill sergeant and the young man lack.
9) Please name any literary works that contain particularly insightful and perceptive descriptions of men’s lives. You do not need to restrict yourself to native English writers. (Please name the particular character if the work contains several).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION RELATED TO THE SURVEY
1) Were there any questions that you found particularly difficult to answer? If so, please indicate which ones they were and why they were difficult.

(Please place mark the box corresponding to your choice by typing ## before it.)
2) Did you ❑ enjoy or ❑ dislike the survey?
3) Did you do the survey ❑ in a hurry or ❑ with good time?
4) How many times did you read each text?
   A______ B______ C______
5) Please re-read the instructions for the survey. If you deviated from them, please indicate what you did differently. You will not be penalised, and your input is still just as valuable, but because this study is based on certain assumptions it is important for me to know if you have done something differently.

6) Do you think the texts contain themes related to men’s lives that were not covered by the questions? If so, please indicate what they are.

7) Do you think the survey was biased in some way?

YOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

(Please place mark the box corresponding to your choice by typing ## before it.)
1) Sex: ❑ male ❑ female
2) Age: _____
3) Educational background: ❑ university level ❑ vocational
   Field of education: ❑ language ❑ literature ❑ other
4) Sexual orientation: ❑ heterosexual ❑ homosexual
5) Have you ever had a serious love relationship?
   ❑ yes ❑ no
6) Are you married?
   ❑ yes ❑ no
7) Were you raised by ❑ a single parent or ❑ a couple?
8) Have you grown up in ❑ a city or ❑ in the countryside? Where?
9) Do you read a lot of literature? What type of literature do you read?
10) Please name characteristics that are common to all the men you know, that none of the women you know have, and that distinguish men from women.
11) What are the characteristics you value in men?
12) What are the characteristics you value in women?
13) What is your definition of masculinity? Has doing this survey affected it in any way?

THANK YOU VERY VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INPUT !!
Appendix F. Various interpretations

I have introduced the common ideas and the opposing opinions in their respective sections. In this section I would like to introduce the actual interpretations found in answers to questions that were placed in the "various interpretations" category, as well as the answers to three questions in the "a few common interpretations".

I have included in the "various interpretations" category questions which provoked less than ten readers to express the same idea. Thus, most of the questions in this category did also have one leading idea, but it was not as prominent as in the other questions and the total number of different interpretations was larger. There are seventeen questions in this category, and if one tries to find some characteristic of the questions that may explain the variety, one can make the following observations. The question which probes the protagonist's attitude towards life addresses an issue that is not directly discussed in the texts, and it resulted in various interpretations for all the texts. Six of the questions ask the reader to relate the issue to real life. Thus it seems readers tend to disagree on the meaning of particular expressions and matters that are not directly discussed in the text.

In responses to text A, Coutts' attitude towards life (Q8), and the reason why he feels ready to be nailed to a cross (Q11) were interpreted in various ways. The meaning of the words "intense and unnatural" was also interpreted in different ways. It was thought that Coutts does not expect much from life (6), does not know what he wants (4), is fatalistic (3) and is looking for comfort and ease rather than strong emotions (4). The first three of these ideas are mentioned by several other readers in responses to other questions, therefore part of the variety might be explained with the fact that some readers had referred to these ideas already earlier in their answers. His desire to be nailed to a cross was seen as an indication that he wants something firm (7), is looking for purpose in marriage (5) and feels guilty (2).
I asked about the meaning of "intense and unnatural" (Q9) because I felt this expression referred to Winifred's sexual attractiveness and wanted to see whether other readers had given the same meaning to these words, although their literal meaning is very different. Only three readers referred to sexuality explicitly and another three talked about passion. Seven readers suggested that Winifred is the opposite of Connie or different from other women Coutts knows. Three suggested that these words are related to his fear of strong women and two thought they are related to his feeling that Winifred is difficult to understand.

As I pointed out in the section on opposing opinions, in responses to text B the readers' opinions varied on the following points: the sergeants' relationship to sexuality (Q7), his attitude towards work (Q4) and life (Q8) and life in the suburbs (Q13). The effect of the soldiers' words (Q10) was also understood in different and opposing ways. I asked this question because I had a clear sense that it indicated he was embarrassed and perhaps even annoyed, and I wanted to see if the other readers interpreted it in the same way. As we saw in the section on opposing opinions, only seven readers shared this view.

In addition, four questions related to a quotation from the text yielded a number of observations. All of these questions also asked the reader to relate the issue to real life. It was thought that his attitude towards his peers (Q12b) is caused by the fact that he feels superior because he respects women (6), is married and knows women better (6) or has a different background (7). The contrast in his life (Q12c) was assumed to be due to difference between home and work (6), difference between his hopes and reality (4), spending so much time at work (4), the cleaning woman bringing new ideas to his life (3), or his inability to enjoy the present (3). His ponderings on the causes for fighting (Q14) were seen as an indication that he is looking for a reason to work (3), is romantic (3), would like to be a hero (3), or has a strong sense of duty and motivation to protect his family and possessions (9). The answers to the question about the function of the cleaning woman centred on three suggestions, and thus it differs from other questions in this category. The readers
suggested that the cleaning woman is a **contrast to the wife** (9), is a **device to illuminate the sergeant's thinking** (7) and **shows what the society is like** (5).

In responses to text C the readers' observations varied when related to the young man's attitude towards life (Q7), the reason why he wants to be tough (Q8), the meaning of the word "childish" (Q9) and the significance of the straight road (Q10). The readers also suggested various reasons why the ambiguity of the girl horrifies the man (Q14a). The readers thought that his attitude towards life is marked by a **longing for unpredictability** (8) and **ease** (8), the **restraint caused by his work** (5), a **desire to be in control** (3) and **dissatisfaction** (5). It was thought that his desire to be tough (Q8) reflects the fact that **toughness is connected with masculinity and strength in our culture** (9). It was also suggested that it is a **response to fear** (7), shows his **desire to measure up to tough women** (2) or his **will not to obey rules** (2), or his desire to **explore new things or avoid boredom** (3). It was thought that the quotation about the straight road suggests that he feels **trapped** (10), that his **life is too predictable** (4), he is under a lot of pressure (3) and feels he **does not have power over his life** (3). When asked why the girl's ambiguity is terrifying, three readers pointed out that it is in fact difficult to understand why it is terrifying for him (3). Eleven readers thought it is terrifying because his **idealised image of the girl breaks**.

I asked the readers what the word "childish" refers to because this word puzzled me when I read the text. It seems it also puzzled the readers as their opinions were rather varied. It was thought that "childish" refers to **children's desire to be omnipotent** (3), the **desire to be someone else** (2), a **desire learnt as a child** (4), or that the expression stands for **selfish and stupid** (7).

I suggested above that many of these questions are related to issues that are not directly discussed in the text, such as the protagonists' attitude towards life and the sergeant's relationship to sex. Five questions related to text B and two to text C asked the reader to relate the issue to real life. I believe that in both cases the readers rely mainly on their understanding of human beings and this may promote variety. In the first case, they have to compensate the lack of direct references to an issue with their general
understanding of people. In the second case, their attention shifts from the text to their opinions about the matter in real life, and these may be somewhat different from their interpretation of the text. One reason for the variety may also be that it is simply difficult to connect the detail mentioned in a question to some specific framework. For example, I did not have a clear answer to what the word “childish” refers to in text C or why Coutts should like to be nailed to a cross in text A.

If we would want to explain this variety with the theories of Holland, Bleich, Fish and Iser, we would have the following options. Holland and Bleich could explain the differences with identity themes or personal concerns, although since none of the interpretations I have presented here are unique, they would again have to show how the same conclusion follows from unique psychological processes. Fish could suggest that the readers have been divided into different interpretive communities. Iser could explain the differences by assuming that the readers' ability to remember previous parts of the text is different, or that they have projected their subjective norms on the text. However, I do not think any of our theorists can suggest why these particular questions should produce different answers rather than some others.

There are also two questions in the "a few common interpretations" category, which have not been properly introduced yet. The first one asked the readers why the young man in text C wants a girl who is not lighthearted although he otherwise longs for lightheartedness. I asked this question because I wanted to see how the readers would resolve the apparent contradiction in the man's desires. Fourteen readers thought he actually wants a pure girl. One reason was that this way he can control her and the other reason was that she fits the image of a proper partner for a serious relationship. Four readers pointed out that the man and the woman mean different things with lightheartedness, to the man it is connected with unpredictability whereas the woman connects it with flirt. When asked why it was horrible to the man that the girl could cross the boundary of fidelity and purity (Q13), the readers answered in the following way: he has to redefine his relationship to her, he feels cheated, she is no longer under his control.
Appendix G. Answers to question 5 in section B of questionnaire D

The question was the following:
Please indicate how well the following adjectives describe the principal male characters.
The scale is from 1 to 4 as follows:
1: not at all
2: somewhat
3: rather well
4: very well

The table shows how many readers chose each option. As the readers have not always answered each question, the total does not add up to 27 for each question.

<table>
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